

Hafa Adai!

Yumul tells Rota, Tinian DPW to collect tipping fees. **PAGE 2**

US military affirms it will end live-fire training in Hawaii's Makua Valley. **PAGE 3**

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Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Volume XXXIII, Issue No. 240

www.saipantribune.com

MONDAY DECEMBER 4, 2023

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DHS urged to revoke the NMI's discretionary parole program

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**
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REPORTER

The CNMI faces the possibility of losing its discretionary parole program that allows it to let Chinese tourists enter the CNMI, now that some U.S. lawmakers have banded together to ask the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to mandate visa requirements across all territories.

See DHS on Page 4



IPI files FOI request on use of \$3M casino regulatory fee

FERDIE DE LA TORRE

» CCC board chair says IPI now owes CCC, gov't \$70M, including \$12.6M regulatory fee

Commonwealth Casino Commission board members review some documents during the board's regular monthly meeting at the Springs Plaza Building in Gualo Rai last Thursday.

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC director Howyo Chi has filed a Freedom of Information

request with the Commonwealth Casino Commission so it could look into how IPI's \$3-million annual casino regulatory fees were being spent.

Chi made the request last Nov. 19

for documents related to the collection and expenditures of the casino regulatory fee and CCC received it the following day. CCC board chair Edward C. DeLeon Guerrero

See IPI on Page 4



Wiseman: I believed, in good faith, tax debt was satisfied

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

In response to a federal tax lien taken out against former Superior

Court Judge David Wiseman, the judge stated that pursuant to an installment agreement he entered into with the CNMI Division of Revenue and Tax back in 2018, he

believed in good faith that he had satisfied his tax debt.

Last week, the division filed a tax lien against Wiseman claiming

See WISEMAN on Page 4



Wiseman

Kilili: Lower insulin costs starting Jan. 1

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
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REPORTER

Good news for people in the CNMI with diabetes, according to Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (D-MP).

Beginning Jan. 1, 2024, patients in the Marianas will have access to Eli Lilly's Insulin Savings Card Program, which automatically caps insulin out-of-pocket costs at \$35 per month for

See KILILI on Page 4



Sablan

INSIDE



NATION

The House voted on Friday to expel Republican Rep. George Santos of New York.

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WORLD

Israel pounded targets in crowded southern Gaza on Saturday and ordered more neighborhoods designated for attack to evacuate.

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LIFE & STYLE

Martin Scorsese's "Killers of the Flower Moon" has been named the best film of the year by the New York Film Critics Circle.

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Local

Yumul tells Rota and Tinian DPW to collect tipping fees

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Public Works Secretary Ray N. Yumul has notified Rota and Tinian that DPW will need to administer tipping fees on all transfer and landfill stations in the CNMI.

In a memorandum dated Friday to Rota DPW resident director George A. Atalig and Tinian DPW resident director Joal Untalan, Yumul said he is authorizing the implementation and collection of tipping fees as provided for in the Commonwealth Code.

All fees collected will be used to support operational needs, Yumul said, citing the Commonwealth's revenue shortfall and the enactment of the budget law, Public Law 23-09, that excludes funding for DPW operations.

To address the continued critical services DPW provides to the public, it becomes necessary to address this funding shortfall through other funding measures, Yumul said.

He said DPW's Solid Waste Division on Saipan relies on tipping fees collected from commercial and residential haulers of trash and other wastes brought to the landfill and transfer station to pay for its operational needs.

Last Nov. 17, Yumul received a letter from Rota DPS resident director Atalig requesting assistance through the Solid Waste Management Revolving Fund to help his office procure diesel fuel for the landfill maintenance operation on Rota.

Atalig cited the difficulties in maintaining the Rota Dump without available fuel supplies.

Last Thursday, Yumul informed Atalig that he looked into Rota's allocation for the Solid Waste Management Revolving Fund and found that no tipping fees were collected and deposited into the sub-account for fiscal year 2022, 2023, and the present.

Yumul said Rota's situation is not unique as the

See YUMUL on Page 4



Yumul

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US military affirms it will end live-fire training in Hawaii's Makua Valley



An Army Kiowa helicopter flies over a convoy of U.S. soldiers at the Makua Military Reservation in Hawaii, Dec. 8, 2003. AP

Registration open for Ship Repair Bootcamp and Plumbing Bootcamp

Guam Community College Continuing Education & Workforce Development announces open registration for two bootcamps coming up this December and January. The Ship Repair Bootcamp XI will start on Monday, December 11, 2023 while the inaugural Plumbing Bootcamp will commence on Tuesday, Jan. 16, 2024.

Participants in the Ship Repair Bootcamp will receive training in Refrigeration and Air Conditioning I, Shielded Metal Arc Welding, and Intro to Auto Body Paint. Additional training will include Heartsaver First Aid, CPR & AED, WorkKeys®, Work Ethics, and OSHA. This bootcamp employer sponsor is Guam Ship Yard they will offer successful completers a job at the end of the program. This bootcamp has 20 open spots for those who qualify. The last day to apply for the Ship Repair bootcamp is by 5pm, Friday, Dec. 8, 2023.

The first Plumbing Bootcamp will start on Tuesday, January 16, 2024. Participants will receive training in Fundamentals of Plumbing. Additional training will include Heartsaver First Aid, CPR & AED, WorkKeys®, Work Ethics, & OSHA. There are 20 slots open to qualifiers. The employer sponsor is Guam Waterworks Authority and completers may be offered a job with the utility agency. The application deadline is Friday, January 12, 2023 by 5 p.m.

Those interested will have to meet the following

requirements:

- Must be Underemployed or Unemployed
- Must have a high school diploma or equivalent
- Must be 18+ years of age
- Must be able to work in the United States
- Must submit police and court clearances

To apply for one of these bootcamps please reach out to GCC's Continuing Education & Workforce Development department at 671-735-5640

extension 5411, or email workforce@guamcc.edu. The CEWD office is located on campus in Building 2000, you may visit Monday through Friday between 8am and 5pm Bootcamp dates listed are subject to change. (GCC)

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HONOLULU (AP)—The U.S. military has confirmed that it will permanently end live-fire training in Makua Valley on Oahu, a major win for Native Hawaiian groups and environmentalists after decades of activism.

U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and Secretary of the Army Christine Wormuth filed a statement with federal court in Hawaii on Friday affirming the military's new stance that it would "no longer need to conduct live-fire training at (Makua Military Reservation), now or in the future," Hawaii News Now reported.

Under the terms of a 2001 settlement, the military hasn't conducted live-fire training at Makua Valley since 2004. But the court filing "removed the threat that Makua will ever

again be subjected to live-fire training," environmental non-profit Earthjustice said in a news release.

Earthjustice has represented local activist group Malama Makua in its long-running legal dispute with the Army.

Makua Valley was the site of decades of live-fire military training. The training at times sparked wildfires that destroyed native forest habitat and sacred cultural sites, Earthjustice said.

The Makua Military Reservation spans nearly 5,000 acres. It is home to more than 40 endangered and threatened species and dozens of sacred and cultural sites, according to Earthjustice.

The military seized Makua Valley for training following the attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, "evicting Ha-

waiians with the promise that their lands would be cleaned up and returned," said Malama Makua board member Sparky Rodrigues. "Almost 80 years later, we're still waiting. Ending live-fire training is an important first step in undoing the wrongs of the past and restoring Makua — which means 'parents' in Hawaiian."

Friday's court filing came 25 years after Malama Makua sued the Army to compel compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act. The law requires federal agencies to assess the environmental impacts of proposed federal actions.

In 2018, the Army agreed to restore access to cultural sites in the valley.

The state's lease to the Army for its use of Makua Valley expires in 2029.



COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



INVITATION FOR BIDS CUC-IFB-24-003

Carolina Heights Waterline Replacement

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the Carolina Heights Waterline Replacement in Tinian, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The project consists of the installation of a waterline main, service laterals, connection to the existing waterline main, and the installation of fire hydrants.

The project is funded by a grant from the US Department of Interior/Office of Insular Affairs (US DOI/OIA) and CUC. The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of approval for project award from US DOI/OIA.

CUC requires the project to be completed in **210 calendar days** from the date of award of the contract.

Prospective Bidders for this IFB must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The IFB package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of \$200.00 for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference will be held on **December 12, 2023 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No. 17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) copies of the bid MUST be submitted in a sealed envelope marked "CUC-IFB-24-003, Carolina Heights Waterline Replacement" to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on December 27, 2023**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before the due date and time or post-marked before the due date and time. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement this form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

A Bid Guarantee of **fifteen percent (15%)** of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The bid guarantee may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety.

A **Payment Bond** of one hundred (100%) percent and a **Performance Bond** of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract. Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered bidders and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on December 14, 2023** to Mr. Manny B. Sablan, Jr., CUC Procurement & Supply Purchasing Administrator, via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org, with a copy to Larry Manacop, Acting Chief Engineer via email at larry.manacop@cucgov.org, Joel Puyat, Engineer via email at joel.puyat@cucgov.org and Ms. Christie L. Sablan, Procurement & Supply, Senior Administrative Technician via email address at christie.sablan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and waive any defects in said bid proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

BETTINA G. TERLAJE
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Flores slams CHCC leadership

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Rep. Marissa Renee Flores (Ind-Saipan) raised some concerns about the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. leadership, ac-

curring it of lack of transparency and accountability.

Speaking during the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp.'s board meeting last Thursday, Flores also accused the CHCC management of being insensi-

tive to patients, mainly due to ignorance of the local culture.

There were no immediate comments from CHCC CEO Esther Muña and other CHCC leaders.

Flores said she speak for

those who are concerned about the CHCC leadership, the lack of transparency and accountability, the insensitive management and care of patients, the high employee turnover, the excessive travel by top management, among other issues.

"The issue of fiduciary re-

sponsibility and leadership in the healthcare system is a matter of concern. Leaders of the healthcare industry must prioritize the well-being of the patients and the overall health of the community they serve. This includes making sound financial decisions that align with the organization's mission and value," she said.

Flores said the CNMI's healthcare leaders must uphold the highest ethical conduct, ensure transparency, and uphold accountability standards in the decision-making process.

"When fiduciary duty is lacking, it can lead to misman-

agement of resources, compromised patient care, and loss of public trust. Addressing this issue requires collaboration between regulatory bodies, governing boards, and healthcare professionals. Implementing robust governance structures, regular audits, and clear guidelines for financial management can help ensure that fiduciary responsibility is upheld and the healthcare system operates in the best interest of the patients and the community," she said.

A longer version of this story is available at www.saipantribune.com



RETIREMENT CEREMONY

Sgt. 1st Class George Diaz, second from left, celebrates with members of his family during his retirement ceremony at the Guam National Guard Barrigada Readiness Complex, Dec. 1, 2023. Diaz retires from the Guard after having served a decorated career of 28 years with multiple combat deployments.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

WISEMAN

From page 1

unpaid taxes in the amount of \$24,551.45 due from 2015 to 2016.

However, Wiseman claims that to the best of his knowledge, he had satisfied his tax debt, which he incurred after selling assets before he left the island, back in 2018.

"On this first day of December, I woke up to a message

from a friend about an article on social media with my judge photo and a story about me not having paid a tax allegedly due from 2015-2016 in the sum of \$24,551.45. Amazing how an accomplished good reputation of four decades in the CNMI, that I am proud of, can be stained by a news article that did not ask or contact the other party for comments prior to publishing the story. In any event, the present tax lien was

filed by Richard Santos, the manager of the Collection Branch of the CNMI Rev and Tax Division with whom I had communicated on several occasions, when I was making payments through him, pursuant to an installment agreement I had with Rev and Tax," he said.

Wiseman claims that he was never notified about the alleged unpaid tax debt or the notice of tax lien.

"Notwithstanding such

communication years ago, I was never contacted nor notified about the alleged tax due, nor did I receive any notice of the filing of said tax lien," he said.

Wiseman explained that he had owed about \$150,000 in taxes after selling assets during the time he was preparing to move off island.

A longer version of this story is available at www.saipantribune.com

KILILI

From page 1

those with commercial insurance.

Sablan said in his e-kilili newsletter over the weekend that patients who don't have insurance can immediately download the Lilly Insulin Value Savings card to receive Lilly insulin for \$35 per month.

Up until now, these programs have been limited to the 50 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico.

At the urging of Sablan, these programs will now be extended to all U.S. territories.

The delegate said this move is expected to provide critical relief to people with diabetes who can face annual costs of more than \$1,000 for the insulin they need to live.

"Today's announcement

builds on my work in Congress to close gaps in the U.S. healthcare system for the territories and reaffirms President [Joe] Biden's call for insulin costs to be capped for everyone, regardless of insurance status," Sablan said.

The CNMI has reportedly been found to have the largest number of cases of diabetes after Prima Indians and Nauru. Based on 2002 statistics, there are 3,019 known diabetes pa-

tients in the CNMI—mostly Chamorros, Carolinians, and Pacific islanders.

In 2008, the Department of Public Health reported that it is estimated that about 30% or one third of the population of the CNMI have above normal levels of sugar in their blood.

The Diabetes Prevention and Control Program has been conducting activities and ways how to combat diabetes.

IPI

From page 1

responded last Thursday to the request in a letter with attached documents.

Chi stated that they are specifically requesting for documents related to the collection and expenditures of the casino regulatory fee since the start. Among the information sought includes detailed records of the collection of regulatory fees from IPI or any other casino licensee, specifying the amounts paid per year since the establishment of the fee requirement.

IPI sought comprehensive expenditure records delineating the allocation and use of the

regulatory fees collected by the CCC, specifying the nature of expenses, disbursements, and the purposes for which these funds have been utilized.

IPI also requested for any reports, financial statements, or documentation demonstrating how CCC appropriated and spent the regulatory fees.

In CCC's response letter that DeLeon Guerrero handed Chi last Thursday, the attached documents include CCC's Annual Citizen-Centric Reports showing the regulatory fees received from IPI from fiscal years 2018 through 2020. IPI did not pay the fee from fiscal years 2021 through 2024, DeLeon Guerrero said.

CCC provided its fund status report for fiscal year 2016

and ending on fiscal year 2022, showing the detailed expense accounts (expenditures).

CCC also wrote Finance Secretary Tracy B. Norita separately to request the Department of Finance for revenue and expense information related to the CCC's procurement, payroll, and other expenditures of regulatory funds. To date, he said, Finance has not responded to their request.

The chairman noted that the documents he provided to Chi are those in the custody of the CCC members.

He said IPI can submit an Open Government Act to Finance who has access to CCC's expenditures and has the staff to compile those documents.

During Thursday's board

meeting, DeLeon Guerrero said the \$3.15 million regulatory fee is the fee that CCC assesses for due diligence for key employee licensing and the gaming equipment. This is also the source of the CCC's budget and has not been paid by IPI since 2020 until now.

CCC receives only \$1 a year from the CNMI government.

DeLeon Guerrero said that IPI now owes the CCC \$12.6 million in unpaid annual regulatory fee and this has caused the termination of all CCC employees.

Including the annual casino license fee and penalties for non-compliance with the CCC's mandates, IPI now owes CCC and the CNMI government over \$70 million.

DHS

From page 1

This means that, if DHS consents to do this, all Chinese tourists seeking to enter the CNMI will be required to obtain a tourist visa first in a U.S. Embassy in China before being allowed to enter the CNMI.

Back in 2019, DHS authorized a discretionary parole program for the CNMI only, which essentially allows Chinese tourists to visit the CNMI for two weeks without having to obtain a non-immigrant visa.

This parole program has contributed significantly to sustaining the CNMI's economy pre-COVID-19 as the CNMI heavily depends on tourism. Through the parole program, the CNMI's China market made up over 40% of the CNMI's tourism industry.

Now, with U.S. lawmakers championing a request to revoke this program by asking DHS to mandate the visa requirements across all territories, the CNMI faces the possibility of the China market completely collapsing, as previously warned by Gov. Arnold I. Palacios.

In a letter to DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, U.S. lawmakers raised their concern about the United States' visa policy for Chinese nationals entering the CNMI.

"According to the U.S. Department of State, a citizen of a foreign country who wishes to enter the United States must first obtain a visa, either a non-immigrant visa for a temporary stay, or an immigrant visa for permanent residence. Visitor visas are non-immigrant visas for persons who want to enter the United States

temporarily for business (visa category B-1), for tourism (visa category B-2), or for a combination of both purposes (B-1/B-2). Currently, certain Chinese nationals are not required to obtain a B-1/B-2 visa to visit the CNMI—even though the islands are a United States territory. The CNMI is the only United States territory into which Chinese nationals can enter without a visa. Under the current requirements, Chinese national must meet extremely low standards in order to be granted entry into the CNMI from China. While specific details of this arrangement remain hidden from the public, it has been reported that individuals must only have a Chinese passport that is valid for six months after the intended stay, as well as be able to prove one's intent to depart from the island within the 14-day window," the letter stated.

To address these concerns, U.S. lawmakers have asked DHS to change this policy and apply visa requirements equally across territories.

"We encourage the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to change this policy and apply the visa requirements equally across territories. It is imperative we deter Chinese Communist Party aggression, espionage, and transnational repression. We strongly urge the implementation of a requirement to obtain a B-1/B-2 visa to enter the CNMI from China, putting the territory in line with this basic requirement enforced throughout the rest of the United States to ensure the safety of the homeland as a whole," the letter added.

A longer version of this story is available at www.saipantribune.com

YUMUL

From page 2

Solid Waste Division on Saipan now relies on tipping fees collected from commercial and residential haulers of trash and other waste

brought to the landfill and transfer station to pay for its operational needs.

Yumul said he is sympathetic to Rota's needs and will provide Atalig's office with a limited amount of funds for the acquisition of diesel fuel to sustain the operations of the Rota Dump.

Saipan Mayor's Office Christmas in the Park



CHRYSTAL MARINO

Marianas Got Talent season 1 contestants sing Christmas carols at the Saipan Mayor's Office Christmas in the Park event at the Sugar King Park in Garapan last Friday.



CHRYSTAL MARINO

In the spirit of community and Christmas, the Saipan Mayor's Office lit up the Sugar King Park in Garapan with Christmas lights and decorations last Friday.



CHRYSTAL MARINO

Dignitaries join Saipan Mayor Ramon Blas "RB" Camacho and the Saipan Mayor's Office as the Sugar King Park in Garapan is lit up with Christmas lights and decorations last Friday.



CHRYSTAL MARINO

Dignitaries stand with Saipan Mayor Ramon Blas "RB" Camacho for a photo shortly after the Christmas at the Park lighting ceremony last Friday at the Sugar King Park in Garapan.




CHRYSTAL MARINO

Attendees enjoy the Christmas lights after the Saipan Mayor's Office lit up Sugar King Park in Garapan with Christmas lights and decorations last Friday.



CHRYSTAL MARINO

Attendees roam through the lit-up Sugar King Park last Friday after the Saipan Mayor's Office lit it up the site with Christmas lights and decorations last Friday.



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JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT # 02-2024
Opening date: November 24, 2023 Closing date: December 22, 2023

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| Location: SAIPAN Position(s): (1) Saipan Airport Manager (1) Comptroller | SALARY \$70,000 (UNGRADED) \$80,000 (UNGRADED) |
| Location: ROTA Position(s): (1) Rota Ports Manager | SALARY \$55,000 (UNGRADED) |

Employment Application must be accompanied with a copy of all required diploma/certificates and/or official sealed transcripts, original copy of recent police record not more than six (6) months old, original copy of U.S. Department of Defense Form DD214 for retired members or veterans of our Armed Forces, and other documents as required for the position. Public Law 11-70 requires that all male applicants age 18 to 25 years old must submit documentation evidencing his registration with the Federal Selective Service System. All applications and required documents must be submitted to the *CPA Administration Office, 2nd Floor Arrival Building, Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport or CPA Administration Office, Tinian International Airport, or Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport.* Failure to provide any of the required documents will result in automatic disqualification. Certain vacancies may require written and/or physical test. Selected applicants will be subjected to pre-employment drug screening, 10-year Criminal History Record Check and 49 CFR Part 1542.209(d) Requirements. CPA reserves the right to waive or implement other qualifications to meet its needs. The deadline for submission of applications and required documents to the CPA Administration Office (Saipan) or at the Tinian International Airport or Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport is no later than **5:00P.M. on Friday, December 22, 2023.**

Detailed information on qualifications and position descriptions for the above positions may be picked up along with the application form from Monday-Friday, 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., except on holidays, at the CPA Administration Office (2nd Floor) of the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport, Arrival Terminal or CPA Admin, Office at the Tinian International Airport or at the Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport. For additional information, please contact the CPA Human Resources Office by email at lorna.robert@cnmiports.com and hrrspecialist@cnmiports.com or by phone at (670)237-6500.

CPA is an Equal Opportunity Employer and CPA hires those who are legally entitled to employment in the CNMI.

LEO B. TUDELA
Executive Director



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REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)
NMHC RFP 2024-002
(This is ad is paid for NMHC with HUD funds)

BID SUBMISSION DATE & TIME: December 06, 2023, 2:00 p.m.

Architect-Engineer Services for the Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Program Infrastructure Projects

Architect-Engineer Services for the Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Program Infrastructure Projects

The RFP packet is available on November 21, 2023, online at www.nmhc.gov.net and at www.cnmi-cdbgdr.com by clicking on the "Procurement Tab". All interested firms shall submit their intent to participate via email at officemanager@nmhc.gov.net.

This procurement is in accordance with the NMHC Procurement Regulations. Proposal procedures shall be in full compliance with NMIAC §100-60-210 (Competitive Sealed Proposals) of the NMHC Procurement Regulations. To also include the provisions of NMHC Procurement Regulations, NMIAC Section §100-60-725 & § 100-60-730 Prohibiting Gratuities, Kickbacks and Contingent fees shall apply.

For more information, contact Mr. Jacob Muna, Office Manager/Procurement Officer, at (670)234-6866/9447 or email at officemanager@nmhc.gov.net during regular business hours, 7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, except CNMI holidays.

/s/ JESSE S. PALACIOS
Corporate Director
Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC)

/s/ MERCEZ "MARCE" M. TOMOKANE
Chairwoman
NMHC Board of Directors

UOG awarded \$5M to advance climate-friendly agriculture, forestry systems

A \$5-million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture has been awarded to the University of Guam to work with forestry managers and farmers to produce commodities using more environmentally friendly and sustainable practices.

UOG and its partners on the project—government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and farmers—will test climate-smart commodities and work toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions in agriculture and forestry systems. The project will also develop solutions to make local commodities more marketable and affordable for island communities.

USDA defines climate-smart commodities as produce and other prod-

ucts, such as fruits, vegetables, livestock, and lumber, that were cultivated or raised through practices that achieve reductions on greenhouse gas and carbon emissions. Some of these practices may include reforestation, wetlands management, soil conservation, and planting of cover crops.

“This is an excellent opportunity to improve precision agriculture for disadvantaged, at-risk island communities to improve food and nutrition security,” said Dr. Romina King, the project’s principal investigator. “We will be working with an interdisciplinary team of farmers, forestry and soil experts, agricultural specialists, and economists at UOG and Gov-Guam to find more efficient



UOG

An orthomosaic map of the Yigo Triton Research Farm in Guam, as seen on Dec. 2, 2022.

ways to produce commodities while reducing emissions. We will also aim to improve sales of these local commodities and better connect farmers with buyers.”

King is an associate professor of geography with the Western Pacific Tropical Research Center under UOG’s College of Natural and Applied Sciences, associate director of NASA Guam Space Grant and NASA Guam EP-SCoR program, and the UOG lead for the Pacific Islands Climate Adaptation Science Center. King also serves as the vice chair for the Government of Guam Climate Change Re-

silience Commission.

“I applaud Dr. King and the team behind this critical project and their initiative to bring together agencies, organizations, and local farmers to work as partners on how we can best adapt to a changing environment,” UOG president Anita Borja Enriquez said.

The project will offer technical workshops to farmers and forestry managers to showcase climate-smart practices and their benefits for underserved producers and landowners. Grants will be provided to farmers willing to test and incorporate

these practices. Market research will be conducted to determine buyers’ willingness to pay for climate-smart commodities. A key output of the project will be the development of accurate and affordable methods to measure carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide emissions suitable for the conditions in the Western Pacific.

“We are very pleased to expand the CNAS research portfolio to include a novel project that will directly benefit farmers and other community members,” said Dr. Adrian Ares, associate director for research at WPTRC

and one of the project’s co-principal investigators. “The grant came after an excellent collaborative effort that entailed solving complex conceptual challenges and engaging highly motivated farmers.”

The project is one of 141 selected projects across the United States funded by the USDA’s Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities program totaling \$3.1 billion. This funding opportunity is intended to expand U.S. markets for climate-smart commodities and provide meaningful benefits to production agriculture. **(UOG)**



UOG

Principal investigator Romina King.

UOG workshops for Caregivers of Persons with Dementia in December

This December, the University of Guam’s Guam/Micronesia Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program is pleased to offer several online workshops for caregivers of persons with dementia.

Guam Medicaid and MIP Program Education Outreach

In the first week of December, Renee Carpela, MPA, from the Department of Public Health and Social Services, Division of Public Welfare, Bureau of Health Care Financing Administration will give two presentations on “Guam Medicaid and MIP Program Education Outreach.” These sessions will be held:

■ 6pm to 8pm, Wednesday, Dec. 6

day, Dec. 6

■ 10am to noon, Saturday, Dec. 9

CARES Activities of Daily Living—Module 6: Eating

In the second week of December, participants will have the opportunity to participate in Module 6 of the CARES Activities of Daily Living training and certification program, which teaches caregivers how to help persons with dementia with the fundamental activities of daily living (ADLs) across all stages of dementia. Module 6 focuses on Eating. These sessions will be held:

■ 6pm to 8pm, Wednesday, Dec. 13

■ 10am to noon, Saturday, Dec. 16

Family caregiver Christmas celebration

In the third week of December, two sessions will provide participants with an opportunity to celebrate Christmas together and to learn about ways to support older adults and persons with dementia during the holiday season. These sessions will be held:

■ 6pm to 8pm, Wednesday, Dec. 20

■ 10am to noon, Saturday, Dec. 23

Sharing caregiver stories and finding support

In the fourth week of December, two sessions will provide participants with an opportunity to share their experiences as family caregivers of persons with dementia and to receive support and guidance from other members of the group. These sessions will be held:

■ 6pm to 8pm, Wednesday, Dec. 27

■ 10am to noon, Saturday, Dec. 30

Participants can attend the Wednesday or Saturday sessions using the following Zoom links:

■ Wednesday sessions: <https://zoom.us/j/92072878067>

■ Saturday sessions: <https://zoom.us/j/91243370958>

[us/j/91243370958](https://zoom.us/j/91243370958)

Ongoing dementia support groups

These sessions are part of the ongoing online support groups for family caregivers of persons with dementia being conducted by the Guam/Micronesia Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program of the UOG School of Health. The support group sessions are held on Zoom on Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings year-round. The sessions are free of charge to partners, family members, and other caregivers of persons with dementia who have ties to Guam and the Micronesian region.

For more information, contact:

■ Dr. Iain Twaddle or Ni-

kolas Gutierrez

Guam/Micronesia Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program

Telehealth Geriatric Support Services

University of Guam

Tel: (671) 735-2883

Email: gwpet.tgss@triton.uog.edu

■ Rhoda Orallo

Health Services of the Pacific

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Email: r.orallo@hspguam.com

This project is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as part of an award totaling \$871,972.00 with zero percentage financed with non-governmental sources. **(UOG)**

Reflective ties: Navigating safety and solidarity in Palau's waters

By CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER

SARA MUIR

U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam

PALAU—In the heart of the Pacific, where the azure waves lap against the shores of Palau, a story unfolded recently, one that speaks to the essence of neighbors helping neighbors. This narrative of cooperation and community didn't begin in the grandeur of a diplomatic meeting but rather on a routine site visit in October 2023. Yet, it found its memorable moment in the formal setting of the November bi-annual Joint Committee Meeting-diplomatic talks enhancing U.S.-Palau cooperation under the Compact of Free Association.

Gov. Sharp Sakuma of Ngaraard, seated among dignitaries, watched as the U.S. Coast Guard representatives presented three rolls of retro-reflective tape before him. This unusual spectacle, far removed from typical diplomatic exchanges, sparked a delight in his eyes. The tape—in vivid red, green, and white—was a beacon of hope and safety for his people.

Lt. Anna Maria Vaccaro, the U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam COFA liaison, had listened intently to the governor during an October site visit in Palau. She recalled the governor's heartfelt concerns about mariners struggling to find the channel entrance upon returning from sea. This problem led to heartbreaking losses. "When Gov. Sakuma shared the stories of families lost at sea, it struck a chord in me. We knew we had to find a simple yet ef-



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

A public works crew refreshes paint and applies retro-reflective tape to channel makers in Ngaraard State, Palau, on Nov. 28, 2023, to improve visibility and save lives.

fective solution," Vaccaro reflected. Drawing on her aids to navigation experience, she considered retro-reflective tape an innovative and practical solution.

Vaccaro leveraged her re-

sources on her return from the initial meeting with the governor. With the local resource USCGC *Hickory* (WLB 212) in drydock, the USCGC *Juniper* (WLB 201), based out of Hawaii, was in Guam, filling

the void. Tasked with servicing aids in the Mariana Islands and Kwajalein, the *Juniper* plays a pivotal role in maritime safety across the Western Pacific. This very crew, steadfast in their duty, generously

provided the retro-reflective tape. This small but significant contribution would leave a lasting impact on the safety efforts in Palau.

With this simple ask to the USCGC *Juniper* crew's boat-swain, the tape was provided, which Vaccaro then proudly presented to Sakuma at the JCM. His reaction was a testament to the power of simple solutions. "Seeing Governor Sakuma's joy, it was clear that sometimes the simplest ideas can make the biggest difference," she added.

Lt. Cmdr. Christine Igisomar was also on hand for the meetings and is the U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia Sector Guam maritime advisor. With familial ties to several Micronesian islands, she emphasized the broader significance of this gesture. "This isn't just about navigation safety; it's about understanding and addressing the unique challenges of island communities. It's personal for us. Our Micronesian neighbors have taken to the sea for millennia and will continue to do so; if we can make their return home this much safer, it will mean that communities can thrive."

Following the JCM, the Ngaraard team wasted no time applying the tape to the channel markers, transforming them into beacons of safety. This creative solution was more than just a navigational aid; it was a lifeline, safeguarding Palau's present and future generations.

"We had a couple of fishermen that went out last night, and they called me before they started diving, saying that it looks like a Christmas decoration on the ocean. It's very

visible, the channel markers, so thank you again to the U.S. Coast Guard for the support," said Sakuma.

This gesture by the USCGC *Juniper* not only supported the ongoing needs in its regular areas of operation but also extended its influence to the waters of Palau, demonstrating the far-reaching impact of cooperation and shared resources within the U.S. Coast Guard's mission.

"We're not just protecting mariners; we're protecting families, generations, livelihoods, and traditions," Igisomar noted.

This story is part of a larger tapestry of collaboration between the U.S. Coast Guard and Palau. With initiatives like the Palau Search and Rescue Exercise on the horizon, this partnership continues to strengthen, grounded in mutual respect and a shared commitment to maritime safety.

In Palau, where the sea is a way of life, the reflective tape symbolizes more than safety; it represents the enduring bond between two neighbors, a testament to the power of understanding, empathy, and innovative problem-solving in forging a safer, more connected Blue Pacific.

U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam team focuses on maritime safety, security, and stewardship in Oceania, including the Republic of Palau. With a primary presence in Guam and Saipan and over 300 members across Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the team maintains a strong U.S. presence in the Micronesia sub-region and adjacent areas, closely tied to local communities.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The work on channel markers comes after the U.S. Coast Guard in Guam was able to provide the retro-reflective tape to solve the visibility issue and help save lives.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The effort is part of the U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam's commitment to supporting search and rescue and reducing the need for searches in the Republic of Palau and Oceania by ensuring mariners can safely return.

Opinion

Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Volume XXXIII, Issue No. 240

Published daily at 2/F JP Center,
Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, CNMI
Mailing Address: PMB 34, Box 10001, Saipan, MP, 96950

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EDITORIAL

DeSantis team's cruel words about trans student athlete embarrass Florida

It was with unnecessary and great cruelty that Gov. Ron DeSantis' administration weighed in on the removal of five employees at a Broward County high school over a transgender female athlete's participation in sports.

DeSantis has gone above and beyond to vilify LGBTQ+ people in the past two years, except this time the perceived enemy isn't an amorphous class of people. It is a trans student at a particular school in a particular community. A student whom DeSantis not only banned via state law from playing girls' sports, but whose dignity his administration denies by refusing to recognize her by the gender with which she has identified since she was a small child.

"Under Governor DeSantis, boys will never be allowed to play girls' sports. It's that simple," Cailey Myers, communications director for the state Department of Education, said in a statement this week regarding an investigation into whether school employees violated the law. The DOE reports to the governor.

Not a 'male student'

It takes a great deal of callousness to publicly misgender a transgender child with no regard for how being at the center of a scandal might affect her. Calling her a "male student," as Myers' statement also did, denies a trans person the right to their own identity. The DeSantis administration, so keen on protecting children from harm—mostly books and drag queen shows—clearly doesn't deem all children worthy of such protection.

The Legislature passed the law banning trans female athletes from girls' sports at public schools in 2021. At the time, the Florida High School Athletic Association reported only 11 known cases of trans athletes in the entire state since 2015. Only two of them played women's sports and one was part of a bowling team. Yet lawmakers painted a misleading picture of a wide conspiracy where boys were being recruited to play disguised as girls.

Even laws that we find misguided and unnecessary must be enforced, and Broward County Public Schools has to investigate whether five employees, among them the principal at Coconut Creek's Monarch High School, violated state statute. The district superintendent vowed to conduct a "fair investigation," which means it should not be subject to pressure from state officials to scapegoat those employees to advance the governor's political agenda.

There is a valid discussion about whether trans athletes might gain an advantage by competing in female sports. Unfortunately, this is a medical and science-based discussion that has been co-opted by the same grievances and bigotry that drove some conservatives this year to boycott Bud Light after the brand partnered with a transgender influencer for a marketing campaign.

Lost in this conversation is the role of public education to ensure a safe place where all students can explore their potential and interests, regardless of gender identity. Republican lawmakers made little effort to find middle ground and provide options for trans students who want to enjoy the benefits of sports, which range from socialization to learning the value of physical activity.

See **DESANTIS** on Page 9



Just ask Taylor Swift: Data make the case for movie theaters versus streaming

By **JEHOSHUA ELIASHBERG, CHARLES B. WEINBERG**
and **BEREND WIERENGA**
LOS ANGELES TIMES

The rise of streaming platforms has forced Hollywood to question everything—and the uncertainty grows more urgent now that the strikes are over and film projects are resuming. Recent research points toward some answers.

We studied IMDb user review data from the two years leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic and found that for 86% of major nationally released movies, people generally enjoyed watching the film in a theater more than they would have at home. The research, conducted with our colleague Jason Ho, showed that the difference was greatest for big-budget and franchise films—apparently best enjoyed on big screens, surrounded by fellow fans, free from the distractions of life.

Hollywood should take note and work closely with theaters, because they are still key to supporting the industry. Theaters meet a need for consumers and bring in revenue that streaming-only releases do not.

Maybe one reason people enjoy theatrical screenings is they're more likely to watch with friends or a date, with whom they can discuss the film afterward. Perhaps spending a premium to see a movie in person, and planning ahead, predisposes people to savor the experience.

Taylor Swift seems to get it: She released her Eras tour film to theaters in mid-October rather than to streamers, even though those companies would have bid aggressively to get the first release rights. This move extended the in-person experience of the concerts themselves by creating a shared experience for the first wave of people watching the film. ("Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour" racked up \$123.5 million at the box office globally in its opening weekend.) Beyoncé is following the same strategy for her concert film "Renaissance."

Hollywood studios face double trouble when they release films online at the same time as in theaters, or very soon after. The first toll is lower box-office revenue, which is still key to most films' financial success. The second price studios pay is subtler. Our research found that if the first viewers are on streaming platforms, the reviews would be worse than if the first viewers are all in theaters. Previous research had found that the earliest reviews of a movie have a particularly strong influence on its box-office performance. Streaming viewers are likely to rate a film less positively, because

they might be doing the dishes or jogging or commuting as they half-watch the film. How can that compare with sitting back in a theater, with your phone silenced and snacks in your lap?

Studios can experience the vicious cycle of a streaming release, which hurts reviews, which hurts box-office sales and subsequent streaming interest. Or they can choose the virtuous cycle of an "only in theaters" release, which supports strong early reviews, which supports further box-office sales and, eventually, interest on streaming platforms.

Not that it's all about money. Similar logic applies when studios and filmmakers are mounting campaigns for Oscar nominations and other awards. They could do much more to encourage voters to see a movie in a theater, such as creating events in areas where voters live and work. Or look to make deals with major theater chains, to create nationwide events with special screenings of Oscar contenders with the aim of creating buzz. (This sort of deal between studios and theaters was illegal for decades but is now possible again.)

Theater owners need no encouragement to pursue a big-screen strategy. But they should still pay attention and act shrewdly to maintain their advantage over streaming platforms. Our research does not explain why viewers rate a movie seen in a theater higher than when seen on a streaming service. That's a great question for theater owners—to find out why and then enhance those features even further. To the extent that enjoyment of a movie depends upon luxury seating, superior video and audio, and special effects, theater owners should consider charging higher prices for such features, as some already do. Theater chains' marketing can also be tailored to remind consumers that they will enjoy a movie more at a theater.

Theaters ought to have a strong tailwind from the trend among streaming platforms to interrupt content with ads. Our data on streaming enjoyment were based on ad-free content. Now that commercials are making a comeback on the small screen, viewers may be more receptive to theaters' appeal.

It's possible that none of this will reverse the long-term decline in theater attendance and revenue in the U.S., but it can help to avoid further decline and keep the theater experience alive for future generations. On behalf of those of us who like going to the movies, we hope so.

Jehoshua Eliashberg, Charles B. Weinberg and Berend Wierenga are professors emeriti of marketing at the University of Pennsylvania, the University of British Columbia and Erasmus University in Holland.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Ukrainians won't submit to Russian rule. The horrors of the Holodomor help explain why

The last Saturday in November this year marked Holodomor Memorial Day, the 90th anniversary of the Great Famine when Soviet leader Josef Stalin's autocratic regime ruthlessly starved 4 million Ukrainians to death.

This horrific event is part of the historic backdrop shaping Ukraine's response to Russia's war. This experience is why, even as a stalemate sets in and winter approaches, the Ukrainian people oppose the idea of negotiating an end to this conflict.

Ukraine has good reason not to trust that its people would be safe under Russian rule. Russia has a long history with Ukraine, but that history is a far cry from Russian President Vladimir Putin's claims that Russians and Ukrainians are "one people." Rather, Russia's history with Ukraine is one of abuse, exploitation and horror.

This was true of the Russian empire and the Soviet Union, and it remains so under Putin's autocratic Russia today. But Holodomor is perhaps the starkest reminder.

Holodomor, in Ukrainian, means "death by starvation." The specific intent of Stalin's regime remains a point of debate, but the cruel and massive scale of suffering his policies caused the Ukrainian people, with full knowledge of the consequences, is undeniable.

Stalin stole land, livestock and farming equipment from millions of Ukrainian farmers and forced them to labor on government farms as part of his collectivization policy launched in the late 1920s. The policy was meant to use grain exports, brought under the control of the Soviet state, to fuel the Soviet Union's industrialization.

Most Ukrainians were small-scale farmers, and they cultivated the breadbasket of Europe, so Stalin used them to feed that transformation. But the famine wasn't simply the unintended consequence of a cruel economic policy. Collectivization happened alongside mass political repression to inten-

tionally crush Ukraine's nationalist spirit.

Ukraine had declared independence in the wake of World War I but lost its bid in 1922 after a three-year war with the Bolshevik Red Army and was forced into the Soviet Union. The desire for independence, though, wasn't defeated, and the Soviet regime knew it. Tens of thousands of Ukrainians were arrested, executed or sent to labor camps in the years that followed. Those who opposed collectivization were declared enemies of the state and targeted for elimination.

The Great Famine affected millions across the Soviet Union, as Stalin imposed grain quotas elsewhere too, but he put impossibly high targets on Ukrainian communities specifically to wear them down. And it worked.

About 13% of the Ukrainian population perished in the 1932-33 government-made famine. The breadbasket was starving to death. Farmers were prohibited from leaving their villages to seek work or food in cities. Villages that failed to meet their quotas were blockaded, leaving the inhabitants to die with no supplies or sustenance. Anyone caught taking produce from a collective field could be shot or imprisoned for stealing from the state.

Meanwhile, the Soviet government extracted millions of tons of grains and had enough in reserves in 1933 to feed 10 million people, according to Soviet records. The government exported and sold Ukrainian grain for cash, fully aware that millions of Ukrainians were dying of hunger as a result. The Soviet government denied the famine, rejected offers of outside assistance and prohibited any discussion of Holodomor for decades thereafter.

For this horrific crime, and many others, Stalin paid no price. The rest of the world conveniently looked away, and more pressing geopolitical concerns soon made it expeditious for the West to form an alliance with his regime to defeat Germany in World War II.

By ELIZABETH SHACKELFORD
Chicago Tribune



Elizabeth Shackelford is a foreign affairs columnist for the Chicago Tribune. She was previously a U.S. diplomat and is the author of *The Dissent Channel: American Diplomacy in a Dishonest Age*.

Ukrainians have taken lessons from this brutal history, and Putin has too. Like Stalin, Putin seeks to violently exploit Ukraine to strengthen himself at home. He uses terror and repression to defeat political enemies. And he expects the rest of the world will ultimately let him get away with it, as he believes he cares more about defeating Ukraine than others care about liberating it.

He could be right. Ukraine is getting few breaks right now. Its military has made no real gains this year, as a bloody stalemate has set in. Military aid commitments from the United States, Ukraine's biggest backer, are stuck in a dysfunctional Congress. Although most American lawmakers and citizens still support providing military assistance to Ukraine, the issue has become a lightning rod for the hard-right wing of the Republican Party, which retains just enough power to act as an obstacle, much to Putin's delight. Meanwhile, the onset of another brutal war in the Middle East has made it easier for Ukraine to disappear from the headlines, even as its own war rages on.

But whether the United States is with them or not, the Ukrainian people will continue the fight. They know this history well and its consequences. They also know what Putin's military did to their people in massacres in Bucha, Mariupol and elsewhere across Ukraine in the past two years.

For Ukraine, this isn't a question of territorial control, power or trade-offs. It's a question of existence.

How did Gov. Newsom fare against his Florida rival, Gov. DeSantis?

What the hell was that?

Ostensibly, Thursday's debate between California Gov. Gavin Newsom, who is not running for president, and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who is, was supposed to be an exploration of the ideological differences between the two chief executives.

After all, one is the embodiment of progressive, blue-state policies and a high-profile surrogate for President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris. The other represents the younger, less orange face of Planet MAGA, and, as it became clear, can't pronounce "Kamala" correctly.

Twenty minutes in, however, I had a headache. There was so much cross-talk and interrupting—by both governors—that it was impossible to hear what they were saying.

If a third debater had been onstage, they almost certainly would have piped up, "See folks, this is why those two should not be on this debate stage."

It was actually pretty funny that Sean Hannity, an unabashed supporter of former President Donald Trump who engineered this overhyped meeting of ideological opposites, positioned himself as the grownup in the room, the guy who wanted to take the temperature down a few notches in order to get his loaded questions answered.

"Let each other breathe," pleaded Hannity. "I don't want to be the hall monitor." Don't worry, Sean, you weren't. He pref-

aced one of his loaded questions thus: "Joe Biden has experienced significant cognitive decline."

DeSantis performed better than I expected against the voluble Newsom, who has two decades of political experience to DeSantis' one. In three previous Republican debates, DeSantis failed to distinguish himself, appearing almost wimpy next to the verbally muscular former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley, who has overtaken him in polls. (Which probably explains why he agreed to debate Newsom after refusing to for most of the past year.) He landed well-deserved blows about California's infamous, and well-acknowledged, problems—homelessness, in particular.

The problem with this spectacle was that too many incompatible things were simultaneously going on: The flailing DeSantis was trying to reestablish himself as a viable GOP alternative in the event that Trump's felony indictments make him, finally, unpalatable to Republican voters.

Newsom was trying to raise his national political profile, defend the Biden-Harris record and argue that California is a better place to live than Florida. (Which, of course, it is.)

Did Newsom have anything to lose? Not really.

Yes, we all know that California is expensive, and that for the first time in forever, more people are leaving than coming in. Yes, we had lockdowns during the pandemic. This was the gist of DeSantis' argument that he's the better governor.

and exposure all over the world. The CNMI can still promote bicycle tourism, especially along Beach Road once it's fixed, and it would even be advantageous to have "bicycle-taxi rides on Beach Road," as riding along the beach at sunset is a very marketable feature of our tourism industry that's not being taken advantage of.

We just need to learn how to do the work and stop waiting and hoping on tourists and investors to just show up. Bicycle tourism is hoping they will come but the Tour de Marianas will grasp the interest of the cycling community and even make them come to the CNMI just to see the Marianas and/or cycle the course. We can only be as big and prosperous as we think.

Ambrose M. Bennett
Kagman III, Saipan

By ROBIN ABCARIAN
Los Angeles Times



And yet, as Newsom pointed out, more Floridians have recently moved to California than Californians to Florida.

"There is one thing that we have in common," said Newsom. "Neither of us will be the nominee for our party in 2024." Oh snap.

DESANTIS

From page 8

ity. The law doesn't even allow trans girls to participate in less competitive recreational intramural sports.

The parents of the Monarch High student sued the state and the Broward school district in 2021 in hopes of keeping her in sports. They argued their daughter—who was 13 at the time and began identifying as a girl as early as preschool—had no competitive advantage and had been on testosterone blockers since age 11.

The lawsuit stated sports were "the major source of her social and friendship network," the Herald reported. A U.S. district judge dismissed the case this month but gave the family until January to amend their lawsuit.






Hundreds of Monarch High students staged a peaceful walk-out this week to protest the removal of its principal and staff. Carrying signs that read "trans rights are human rights," they should be an example for state government that uses its apparatus to turn trans children into pariahs.

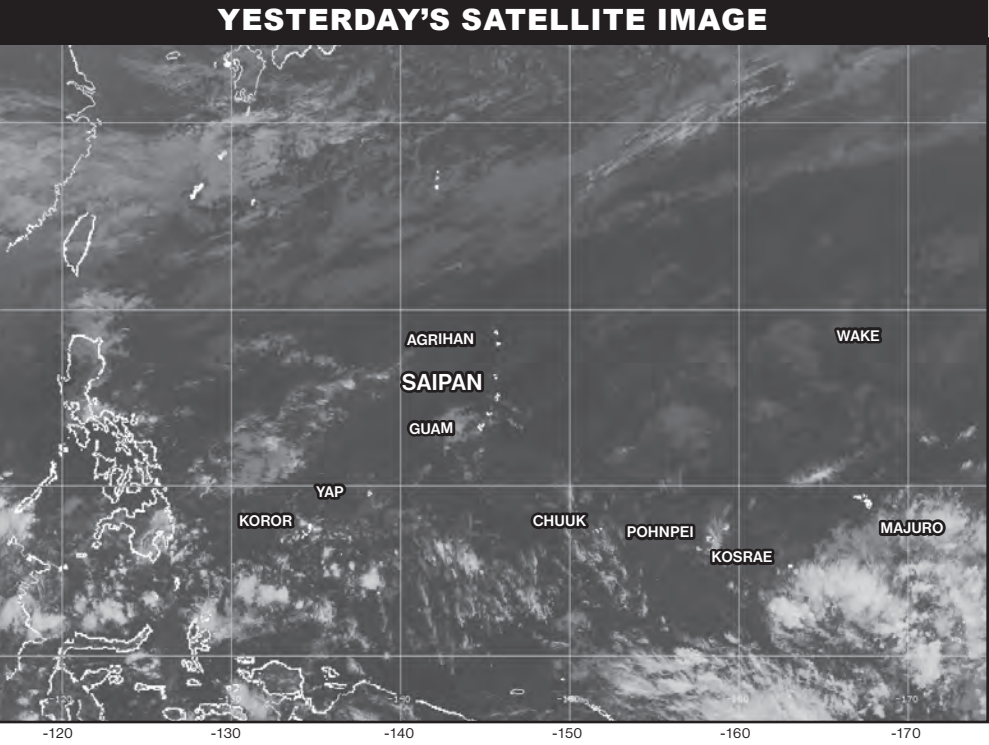
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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I'm sure the people of the CNMI are going to look back at history and realize that our leaders should have listened to Ambrose on many issues. Now I see MVA is talking about "building bicycle tourism," which is something I've written about on several occasions dating back over a decade, but their present idea for bicycle tourism falls far short of the idea I promoted. I truly applaud the effort but it's just another bike race with no international appeal and tourists are not coming just to ride a bike. I earlier wrote MVA about creating the "Tour de Marianas," which would be a race starting in Guam to Rota, to Tinian and culminating on Saipan. The idea was for MVA to work with the Tour de France organization to promote the event and even make the race one of the "qualifying races to participate in the world-famous Tour de France, which would give the CNMI millions in free international advertisement

The Weather

| 5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|
| TODAY | | TUESDAY | | WEDNESDAY | | THURSDAY | | FRIDAY | |
|  | |  | |  | |  | |  | |
| Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 20 mph. | | Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 10 to 20 mph. | | Breezy. Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers. | | Breezy. Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers. | | Breezy. Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers. | |
| 86 | 77° | 86 | 77° | 86 | 77° | 86 | 77° | 86 | 77° |



Satellite indicating partly cloudy skies and isolated showers over the Marianas. An approaching trade trough is bringing mostly cloudy skies and scattered showers east of the coastal waters. Latest buoy and altimetry data are showing seas of 6 to 9 feet. Winds are moderate to fresh.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: <https://www.weather.gov/gum/>

| MICRONESIA | | | ▲ ▼ °F |
|---------------|---------------|-----------|--------|
| Guam and Rota | Partly Cloudy | 86° / 79° | |
| Palau | Showers | 85° / 78° | |
| Yap | Mostly Cloudy | 86° / 79° | |
| Chuuk | Partly Cloudy | 86° / 80° | |
| Pohnpei | Cloudy | 85° / 78° | |
| Kosrae | Cloudy | 85° / 78° | |
| Majuro | Cloudy | 85° / 80° | |

| DAY | SUNRISE | SUNSET |
|-----------|---------|---------|
| Today | 6:28 AM | 5:45 PM |
| Tuesday | 6:29 AM | 5:45 PM |
| Wednesday | 6:29 AM | 5:45 PM |
| Thursday | 6:30 AM | 5:46 PM |
| Friday | 6:30 AM | 5:46 PM |

| DAY | MOONRISE | MOONSET | MOONRISE |
|-----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Today | - | 11:54 AM | 11:42 PM |
| Tuesday | - | 12:29 PM | - |
| Wednesday | 12:29 AM | 1:03 PM | - |
| Thursday | 1:15 AM | 1:35 PM | - |
| Friday | 2:01 AM | 2:09 PM | - |

| AROUND THE GLOBE | | | ▲ ▼ °F |
|------------------|---------------|-----------|--------|
| Auckland | Mostly Sunny | 72° / 59° | |
| Beijing | Sunny | 45° / 21° | |
| Hong Kong | Partly Cloudy | 73° / 63° | |
| Honolulu | Showers | 82° / 73° | |
| London | Sunny | 43° / 34° | |
| Los Angeles | Sunny | 73° / 53° | |
| Manila | Partly Cloudy | 90° / 77° | |
| Melbourne | Rain | 66° / 55° | |
| Miami | Mostly Sunny | 78° / 71° | |
| New York | Showers | 53° / 36° | |
| Osaka | Sunny | 52° / 39° | |
| Paris | Partly Cloudy | 39° / 28° | |
| Busan | Mostly Sunny | 48° / 36° | |
| Rome | Mostly Sunny | 55° / 39° | |
| Salem | Partly Cloudy | 70° / 54° | |
| San Francisco | Partly Cloudy | 59° / 48° | |
| Seoul | Mostly Sunny | 45° / 32° | |
| Tokyo | Mostly Sunny | 50° / 39° | |
| Washington, DC | Partly Cloudy | 54° / 34° | |

| TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY | | | FEET |
|----------------------------|-----------|-------|------|
| 6:10 AM | Low Tide | -0.06 | |
| 2:06 PM | High Tide | 1.56 | |
| 8:07 PM | Low Tide | 1.05 | |
| 11:26 PM | High Tide | 1.18 | |

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF OCTOBER 30, 2023

| DEPARTURES | | | | ARRIVALS | | | |
|----------------------|--------|---------|----------------------|----------------------|---------|----------|------------------------|
| SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM) | | | | GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN | | | |
| UA076 | 9:50AM | 10:30AM | Daily | UA174 | 8:00AM | 8:45AM | Daily |
| SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT) | | | | NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN | | | |
| UA824 | 7:05AM | 9:45AM | 1, 3, 5 | UA825 | 9:25PM | 2:00AM+1 | 2, 4, 7 |
| GUAM-MANILA (MNL) | | | | MANILA (MNL)-GUAM | | | |
| PR 111 | 5:55AM | 7:55AM | Daily | UA189 | 00:40AM | 6:30AM | 3, 6 |
| UA193 | 7:50PM | 11:50PM | 2, 5 via Palau | PR110 | 10:05PM | 3:55AM+1 | Daily |
| UA183 | 7:55PM | 9:50PM | Daily | UA192 | 10:40PM | 6:30AM+1 | 2, 5 via Palau |
| | | | | UA184 | 10:55PM | 4:45AM+1 | 1, 3, 4, 6, 7 |
| SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL) | | | | MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN | | | |
| 7C3403/2305 | 4:40AM | 10:20PM | Daily | UA189/174 | 00:40AM | 8:45AM+1 | 3, 6 via Guam |
| UA076/183 | 9:50AM | 9:50PM | Daily via Guam | UA192/174 | 10:40PM | 8:45AM+1 | 2, 5 via Palau, Guam |
| UA076/193 | 9:50AM | 11:50PM | 2, 5 via Guam, Palau | UA184/174 | 10:55PM | 8:45AM+1 | 1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via Guam |
| | | | | 7C2306/3406 | 11:15PM | 3:30PM+1 | Daily |
| SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN) | | | | INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN | | | |
| TW308 | 2:15AM | 6:10AM | Daily | 7C3406 | 10:10AM | 3:30PM | Daily |
| 7C3403 | 4:40AM | 8:35AM | Daily | TW307 | 7:45PM | 1:15AM+1 | Daily |
| 7C3405 | 4:35PM | 8:25PM | Daily | 7C3404 | 10:15PM | 3:35AM+1 | Daily |

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF OCTOBER 30, 2023

| SAIPAN TO ROTA | | | | | |
|----------------|--------|------|---------|---------|-----------------|
| FLIGHT # | FROM | TO | DEPARTS | ARRIVES | FREQUENCY |
| 1301 | SAIPAN | ROTA | 08:30 | 09:00 | Oct 21-31, 2023 |
| 1302 | SAIPAN | ROTA | 10:30 | 11:00 | Daily |
| 1303 | SAIPAN | ROTA | 15:30 | 16:00 | Daily |

| ROTA TO SAIPAN | | | | | |
|----------------|------|--------|---------|---------|-------------------|
| FLIGHT # | FROM | TO | DEPARTS | ARRIVES | FREQUENCY |
| 3101 | ROTA | SAIPAN | 9:30 | 10:00 | Oct 21-31, 2023 |
| 3102 | ROTA | SAIPAN | 11:30 | 12:00 | Saturday & Sunday |
| 3103 | ROTA | SAIPAN | 13:30 | 14:00 | Monday To Friday |
| 3104 | ROTA | SAIPAN | 16:30 | 17:00 | Daily |

| ROTA TO GUAM | | | | | |
|--------------|------|------|---------|---------|------------------|
| FLIGHT # | FROM | TO | DEPARTS | ARRIVES | FREQUENCY |
| 3401 | ROTA | GUAM | 11:30 | 12:00 | Monday To Friday |

| GUAM TO ROTA | | | | | |
|--------------|------|------|---------|---------|------------------|
| FLIGHT # | FROM | TO | DEPARTS | ARRIVES | FREQUENCY |
| 4301 | GUAM | ROTA | 12:30 | 13:00 | Monday To Friday |

| SAIPAN TO TINIAN | | | | | |
|------------------|--------|--------|---------|---------|-----------|
| FLIGHT # | FROM | TO | DEPARTS | ARRIVES | FREQUENCY |
| 1201 | SAIPAN | TINIAN | 7:30 | 7:45 | Daily |
| 1202 | SAIPAN | TINIAN | 8:00 | 8:15 | Daily |
| 1203 | SAIPAN | TINIAN | 9:00 | 9:15 | Daily |
| 1204 | SAIPAN | TINIAN | 10:00 | 10:15 | Daily |
| 1206 | SAIPAN | TINIAN | 15:00 | 15:15 | Daily |
| 1207 | SAIPAN | TINIAN | 16:00 | 16:15 | Daily |
| 1208 | SAIPAN | TINIAN | 17:00 | 17:15 | Daily |

| TINIAN TO SAIPAN | | | | | |
|------------------|--------|--------|---------|---------|-----------|
| FLIGHT # | FROM | TO | DEPARTS | ARRIVES | FREQUENCY |
| 2101 | TINIAN | SAIPAN | 8:00 | 8:15 | Daily |
| 2102 | TINIAN | SAIPAN | 8:30 | 8:45 | Daily |
| 2103 | TINIAN | SAIPAN | 9:30 | 9:45 | Daily |
| 2104 | TINIAN | SAIPAN | 10:30 | 10:45 | Daily |
| 2106 | TINIAN | SAIPAN | 15:30 | 15:45 | Daily |
| 2107 | TINIAN | SAIPAN | 16:30 | 16:45 | Daily |
| 2108 | TINIAN | SAIPAN | 17:30 | 17:45 | Daily |

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Business

US joins other nations in swearing off coal power to clean the climate

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP)—The United States committed Saturday to the idea of phasing out coal power plants, joining 56 other nations in kicking the coal habit that's a huge factor in global warming.

U.S. Special Envoy John Kerry announced that America was joining the Powering Past Coal Alliance, which means the Biden Administration commits to building no new coal plants and phasing out existing plants. No date was given for when the existing plants would have to go, but other Biden regulatory actions and international commitments already in the works had meant no coal by 2035.

"We will be working to accelerate unabated coal phase-out across the world, building stronger economies and more resilient communities," Kerry said in a statement. "The first step is to stop making the problem worse: stop building new unabated coal power plants."

Coal power plants have already been shutting down across

the nation due to economics, and no new coal facilities were in the works, so "we were heading to retiring coal by the end of the decade anyway," said climate analyst Alden Meyer of the European think-tank E3G. That's because natural gas and renewable energy are cheaper, so it was market forces, he said.

As of October, just under 20% of the U.S. electricity is powered by coal, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. The amount of coal burned in the United States last year is less than half what it was in 2008.

Coal produces about 211 pounds (96 kilograms) of heat-trapping carbon dioxide per million BTUs of energy produced, compared to natural gas which produces about 117 pounds (53 kilograms) and gasoline which is about 156 pounds (71 kilograms), according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

The U.S. had been pushing other nations, especially China and India which are build-

ing new coal plants pell-mell, to get rid of the fuel, which causes more heat-trapping carbon emissions than other power systems.

Saturday's action "sends a pretty powerful international signal that the U.S. is putting its money where its mouth is," Meyer said.

The Powering Past Coal Alliance started six years ago and had 50 country members until Saturday when the United States and six others joined, said alliance spokeswoman Anna Drazkiewicz. Others joining Saturday include the Czech Republic and the Dominican Republic.

"Energy transition is not an easy task and as such requires strong cooperation and support," said Kosovo environment minister Artane Rizvanolli. "Joining the Powering Past Coal Alliance reiterates Kosovo's clear commitment and ongoing efforts towards a socially just and clean energy sector."

Breaches by Iran-affiliated hackers believed to span multiple US states

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP)—A small western Pennsylvania water authority was just one of multiple organizations breached in the United States by Iran-affiliated hackers who targeted a specific industrial control device because it is Israeli-made, U.S. and Israeli authorities say.

"The victims span multiple U.S. states," the FBI, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, known as CISA, as well as Israel's National Cyber Directorate said in an advisory emailed to The Associated Press late Friday.

They did not say how many organizations were hacked or otherwise describe them.

Matthew Mottes, the chairman of the Municipal Water Authority of Aliquippa, which discovered it had been hacked on Nov. 25, said Thursday that federal officials had told him the same group also breached four other utilities and an aquarium.

Cybersecurity experts say that while there is no evidence of Iranian involvement in the Oct. 7 attack into Israel by Hamas that triggered the war in Gaza they expected state-backed Iranian hackers and pro-Palestinian hacktivists to step up cyberattacks on Israeli and its allies in its aftermath. And indeed that has happened.

The multiagency advisory explained what CISA had not when it confirmed the Pennsylvania hack on Wednesday—that other industries outside water and water-treatment facilities use the same equipment—Vision Series programmable logic controllers made by Unitronics—and were also potentially vulnerable.

Those industries include "energy, food and beverage manufacturing and healthcare," the advisory says. The devices regulate processes including pressure, temperature and fluid flow.

The Aliquippa hack promoted workers to temporarily halt pumping in a remote station that regulates water pressure for two nearby towns, leading crews to switch to manual operation. The hackers left a digital calling card on the compromised device saying all Israeli-made equipment is "a legal target."

The multiagency advisory said it was not known if the hackers had tried to penetrate deeper into breached networks. The access they did get enabled "more profound cyber physical effects on processes and equipment," it said.

The advisory says the hackers, who call themselves "Cyber Av3ngers," are affiliated with Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, which the U.S. designated as a for-

eign terrorist organization in 2019. The group targeted the Unitronics devices at least since Nov. 22, it said.

An online search Saturday with the Shodan service identified more than 200 such internet-connected devices in the U.S. and more than 1,700 globally.

The advisory notes that Unitronics devices ship with a default password, a practice experts discourage as it makes them more vulnerable to hacking. Best practices call for devices to require a unique password to be created out of the box. It says the hackers likely accessed affected devices by "exploiting cybersecurity weaknesses, including poor password security and exposure to the internet."

Experts say many water utilities have paid insufficient attention to cybersecurity.

In response to the Aliquippa hack, three Pennsylvania congressmen asked the U.S. Justice Department in a letter to investigate. Americans must know their drinking water and other basic infrastructure is safe from "nation-state adversaries and terrorist organizations," U.S. Sens. John Fetterman and Bob Casey and U.S. Rep. Chris Deluzio said. Cyber Av3ngers claimed in an Oct. 30 social media post to have hacked 10 water treatment stations in Israel, though it is not clear if they shut down any equipment.

Nation

House expels Rep. Santos



Rep. George Santos, R-N.Y., leaves the Capitol after being expelled from the House of Representatives, Friday, Dec. 1, 2023, in Washington.

WASHINGTON (AP)—The House voted on Friday to expel Republican Rep. George Santos of New York after a blistering ethics report on his conduct heightened lawmakers' concerns about the scandal-plagued freshman. Santos became just the sixth member in the chamber's history to be ousted by colleagues, and the third since the Civil War.

The vote to expel was 311-114, easily clearing the two-thirds majority required. House Republican leaders opposed removing Santos, whose departure leaves them with a razor-thin majority, but in the end 105 GOP lawmakers sided with nearly all Democrats to expel him.

The expulsion marked the final congressional chapter in a spectacular fall from grace for Santos. Celebrated as an

up-and-comer after he flipped a district from Democrats last year, Santos' life story began to unravel before he was even sworn into office. Reports emerged that he had lied about having Jewish ancestry, a career at top Wall Street firms and a college degree, among other things.

Then, in May, Santos was indicted by federal prosecutors on multiple charges, turning his presence in the House into a growing distraction and embarrassment to the party.

Santos joins a short list of lawmakers expelled from the House, and for reasons uniquely his own. Of the previous expulsions in the House, three were for siding with the Confederacy during the Civil War. The remaining two occurred after the lawmakers were convicted

of crimes in federal court, the most recent in 2002.

Seeking to remain in office, Santos had appealed to colleagues to let the court process play out. He warned of the precedent they would set by expelling a member not yet convicted of a crime.

"This will haunt them in the future," Santos told lawmakers on Thursday evening as they debated his removal.

As it became clear Friday that he would be expelled, Santos appeared resigned to his fate. He placed his overcoat over his shoulders and shook hands with conservative members who voted against his expulsion. House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., who voted against expelling Santos, was solemn as he announced the result of the vote and declared the New York seat vacant.

Trump calls Biden the 'destroyer' of democracy

CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa (AP)—Former President Donald Trump on Saturday attempted to turn the tables on his likely rival in November, President Joe Biden, arguing that the man whose election victory Trump tried to overturn is "the destroyer of American democracy."

Trump's allegations about Biden, a Democrat, echo the ones that Biden has been making for years against his predecessor. As Trump has dominated the Republican presidential primary and talked about targeting his rivals and the news media if he wins the White House again, Biden has stepped up his own warnings, contending Trump is "determined to destroy American democracy."

On Saturday, Trump made his most explicit argument to date on why voters should

instead see his rival as the bigger democratic threat. Trump repeated his longstanding contention that the four criminal indictments against him show Biden is misusing the federal justice system against his rival.

"He's been weaponizing government against his political opponents like a Third World political tyrant," Trump said to a crowd in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. "Biden and his radical left allies like to pose as standing up as allies of democracy," Trump continued, arguing: "Joe Biden is not the defender of American democracy, Joe Biden is the destroyer of American democracy."

Ammar Moussa, a Biden campaign spokesman, responded: "Donald Trump's America in 2025 is one where the government is his personal weapon to lock up his political enemies. You don't have to

take our word for it — Trump has admitted it himself."

Trump has long promised to prosecute Biden in retaliation should he return to the White House. On Saturday, though, the former president extended his arguments about Biden's threat to democracy to lawsuits filed by two liberal organizations seeking to rule him ineligible for office under a rarely used Civil War-era constitutional provision that prohibits those who "engaged in insurrection" from returning to office.

All of the suits to date have failed. Biden has no involvement in them, but Democratic donors who back him also help fund the liberal groups filing the claims. That's led Trump to blame them on the president, whom he contended had "defaced the Constitution" in trying to block him.

Asia

ASIAN BRIEFS

China says US arms sales to Taiwan are turning the island into a 'powder keg'

BEIJING (AP)—China's defense ministry said Thursday that the U.S. should stop interfering in both Taiwan and the South China Sea, saying U.S. arms sales to Taiwan are making the situation more dangerous. Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party is "turning Taiwan into a weapons depot and a powder keg," said Senior Col. Wu Qian, the defense ministry's top spokesperson. He spoke less than two months ahead of a presidential election in which Taiwan voters will choose between the ruling party, which favors a stronger defense and close ties to the U.S., and opposition parties that advocate improving ties with China as the best way to reduce tensions. "Taiwan's security depends on the peaceful development of cross-strait relations instead of a few pieces of U.S.-made weapons," Wu said at a monthly news conference. The 160-kilometer (100-mile) -wide Taiwan Strait runs between Taiwan and China's east coast. China claims the self-governing island as its territory and says it must come under its control. The U.S. government does not support formal independence for Taiwan but is bound by its own laws to provide the island with the means to defend itself. "We request that the U.S. side acts in accordance with its words and takes concrete steps to honor its commitment not to support Taiwan independence, stops arming Taiwan and stops undermining China's core interest," Wu said.

Some American lawmakers are calling for stepped-up support in response to threatening military drills by China.

S. Korea launches its first spy satellite after rival N. Korea does the same

VANDENBERG SPACE FORCE BASE, Calif. (AP)—South Korea launched its first military spy satellite into space Friday, a little over a week after North Korea claimed to put its own spy satellite into orbit for the first time as tensions rise between the rivals. Launched from California's Vandenberg Space Force Base using SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket, it was the first of five spy satellites South Korea plans to send into space by 2025 under a contract with SpaceX. The event had been scheduled for earlier in the week but was pushed back because of weather conditions.

South Korea had no military reconnaissance satellites of its own in space and has partially resorted to the United States' spy satellites to monitor moves by North Korea. South Korea's Defense Ministry described the launch as successful, saying the satellite had a communication with an overseas ground station. A ministry statement said the launch allowed the South Korean military to acquire an independent space-based surveillance system. It said the satellite would also help bolster the military's preemptive missile strike capability, a key part of its so-called three-axis system that includes missile defense and massive retaliatory capabilities. After two launch failures earlier this year, North Korea said it successfully placed its Malligyong-1 spy satellite into orbit last week. North Korea has since said its satellite had transmitted imagery with space views of key sites in the U.S. and South Korea, including the White House and the Pentagon. But it hasn't yet released any of those satellite photos.

A suspected bomb blast kills at least 4 Christian worshippers during Mass in southern PH

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—A powerful explosion believed caused by a bomb ripped through a Catholic Mass and killed at least four people and wounded dozens of others Sunday in a predominantly Muslim city in the southern Philippines, officials said. The morning Mass was underway in a gymnasium at the state-run Mindanao State University in Marawi city when the explosion happened, causing panic among dozens of students and teachers and leaving the victims bloodied and sprawled on the ground, said Taha Mandangan, the security chief of the state-run campus. At least two of the wounded were fighting for their lives, Mandangan said. "This is clearly an act of terrorism. It's not a simple feud between two people. A bomb will kill everybody around," Mandangan told The Associated Press by telephone. Regional military commander Maj. Gen. Gabriel Viray III said at least four people were killed by the explosion, including three women, and 50 others were brought to two hospitals for treatment of mostly minor injuries. Only two of those killed had been identified, officials said. Army troops and police immediately cordoned off the area and were conduct-

ing an initial investigation and checking security cameras for any indication of who may have been responsible for the attack. Security checkpoints were set up around the city. The deadly blast set off a security alarm beyond Marawi city as the Christmas season ushered in a period of travel, shopping sprees and traffic jams across the country. The Philippine coast guard said it ordered all its personnel to intensify intelligence gathering, stricter inspections of passenger ferries and the deployment of bomb-sniffing dogs and sea marshals following the suspected bomb attack.

7.6-magnitude earthquake strikes off the southern PH, briefly prompting a tsunami warning

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—A powerful earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 7.6 struck Saturday off the southern Philippine coast, prompting many villagers to flee their homes in panic around midnight after Philippine authorities issued a tsunami warning. The quake struck at a depth of 32 kilometers (20 miles), according to the U.S. Geological Survey. There were no immediate reports of major damage or casualties. The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center initially said that based on the magnitude and location, it expected tsunami waves to hit the southern Philippines and parts of Indonesia, Palau and Malaysia. But the center later dropped its tsunami warning. In Japan, authorities issued evacuation orders in various parts of Okinawa Prefecture, including for the entire coastal area, affecting thousands of people. Terecito Bacolcol, the head of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology, told The Associated Press his agency advised residents along the coast of southern Surigao del Sur and Davao Oriental provinces to immediately evacuate to higher ground or move farther inland. Owners of boats in harbors, estuaries or shallow coastal waters off the two provinces should secure their boats and move away from the waterfront, the quake agency said in its tsunami warning. Boats already at sea should stay offshore in deep waters until further advised, it said. Based on the quake's magnitude, Bacolcol said a 1-meter (3.2-foot) tsunami may hit but the wave could be higher in enclosed coves, bays and straits.

World

Israeli offensive shifts to crowded southern Gaza



Palestinians mourn their relatives killed in the Israeli bombardment of the Gaza Strip, in the hospital in Khan Younis, Saturday, Dec. 2, 2023.

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip (AP)—Israel pounded targets in crowded southern Gaza on Saturday and ordered more neighborhoods designated for attack to evacuate, driving up the death toll as the United States and others urged it to do more to protect civilians a day after a truce collapsed.

The prospect of further cease-fires in Gaza appeared bleak, as Israel recalled its negotiators and Hamas' deputy leader said any further swap of Gaza-held hostages for Palestinians imprisoned by Israel would only happen as part of ending the war.

"We will continue the war until we achieve all its goals, and it's impossible to achieve those goals without the ground operation," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in an address Saturday night.

At least 200 Palestinians were killed after the fighting resumed Friday morning following the weeklong truce with the territory's ruling militant group Hamas, according to the Health Ministry in Gaza. Several multi-story residential buildings were hit on Saturday, engulfing neighborhoods in huge clouds of smoke.

The military also dropped leaflets ordering the evacuation of areas that make up about one-quarter of the Gaza Strip, with hundreds of thousands of residents, U.N. monitors said. Ahead of a resumption of fighting, the United States had warned Israel to avoid significant new mass displacement.

Separately, the ministry said the overall death toll in Gaza since the Oct. 7 start of the war had surpassed 15,200, a sharp jump from the previous count

of more than 13,300 on Nov. 20. The ministry does not differentiate between civilian and combatant deaths, but it said 70% of the dead were women and children. It said more than 40,000 people had been wounded since the war began.

"Too many innocent Palestinians have been killed. Frankly, the scale of civilian suffering and the images and videos coming from Gaza are devastating," U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris told reporters during the COP28 climate conference in Dubai.

Appeals from the U.S., Israel's closest ally, to protect civilians came after an offensive in the first weeks of the war devastated large areas of northern Gaza. Some 2 million Palestinians, almost Gaza's entire population, are now crammed into the territory's southern half.

Police in Paris arrest man who allegedly targeted passersby, killing 1 and injuring 2, official says

PARIS (AP)—French police arrested a man who targeted passersby in Paris on Saturday night, killing a German tourist with a knife and injuring two others, France's interior minister said.

Police subdued the man, a 25-year-old French citizen who had spent four years in prison for planning a violent offense. After his arrest, he expressed anguish about Muslims dying, notably in Afghanistan and the Palestinian territories, and claimed that France was an accomplice, French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said. The attacker apparently cried "Allahu Akbar" (God is

great), Darmanin added.

"This person was ready to kill others," Darmanin told reporters.

The anti-terrorism prosecutor's office confirmed it has opened an investigation.

The attacker went after a German couple with a knife, killing the man and used a hammer to injure two others.

The attacker, who was not identified by name, left prison after four years in 2020 and was under surveillance and undergoing psychiatric treatment, the minister said, painting a brief portrait of the assailant, who was born in Neuilly-Sur-Seine, a Paris suburb. He was most recently

living with his parents in the Essonne region, south of Paris.

The fatal attack occurred in the 15th district of the French capital with the assailant using a knife to kill the German tourist, who was not identified. He then crossed the Seine river to the Right Bank and used a hammer to attack the injured. Details about the victims were not immediately known.

The attacker was stopped by police who twice fired a taser at him in the stomach, the minister said, praising the officers for their quick response and reiterating that "there would doubtless have been other dead."

Health & Wellness

Traffic exhaust could increase blood pressure, study finds

By DAVID KROMAN
The Seattle Times

Even brief exposure to highway pollution could cause significant increases in blood pressure, a new study from the University of Washington has found, adding to a growing body of work correlating vehicle exhaust with negative health outcomes.

The effects are near immediate: Two hours in Seattle's rush hour was enough to increase blood pressure by nearly 5 millimeters of mercury, a jump that would push someone with normal levels to elevated or from elevated levels to stage 1 hypertension.

The peer-reviewed study, published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, was conducted by a team at the UW, led by Dr. Joel Kaufman, a university physician and professor of environmental and occupational health sciences. The increase, he said, was about what you'd expect to see in someone who switched from a low-salt to high-salt diet.

"It's a real interesting, important number that if you think of millions of people

having this exposure every day, that's moving a lot of people from the normal to the high blood pressure range," Kaufman said. "That has a lot of impact on the risk of heart attacks and strokes."

At a micro level, the study suggests a need for improved filtration in vehicles; absent a HEPA filter, most cars fail to catch possibly harmful particles piped in from the outside.

On a broader level, it's another data point in a larger conversation around how the country's highway system harms those whose daily lives are shrouded in tailpipe fumes. Low-income and working-class communities, often with large populations of people of color, are disproportionately likely to live near major highways. When the highway system was built to begin with, it was often through well-established Black or Latino neighborhoods.

"The big issue here is not just about being in the car," said Kaufman. "The big issue is that lots of people breathe traffic-related air pollution. That could be



WELCOMIA

Research has already established that exposure to car fumes can lead to increased risk of stroke or heart attack. And some lab-based work has suggested blood pressure spikes may be a factor.

walking or biking or living, and historically these major roadways were cut right through low-income areas."

Research has already established that exposure to car fumes can lead to increased risk of stroke or heart attack. And some lab-based work has suggested blood pressure spikes may be a factor.

The UW team took the question further. To start, they tested participants in a closed setting—piping small amounts of diesel fumes into a room and measuring blood pressure. They saw a bump in blood pressure among the roughly 40 participants.

But that setting, the team concluded, was more likely to test

occupational exposure to exhaust, rather than more typical ambient highway pollution.

So the team moved the experiment to the streets. Using a Dodge Caravan equipped with advance filtration and monitors, a driver carted each participant—screened to exclude most confounding factors—through Seattle's rush hour traffic for two hours on three different occasions. On two of the drives, the air was unfiltered; on one, it was filtered. The participants did not know which was which.

Researchers found that,

during the unfiltered drives, the blood pressure increases were similar to those seen in the lab, of just under 5 millimeters of mercury.

This was a surprise even to the research team because the number of particles measuring 2.5 micrometers in diameter or less—which are measured to gauge air quality and are high during wildfire season—was less than in the lab setting.

However, the number of ultrafine particles measuring 0.1 micrometers or less—which do not show up on air quality reports—was roughly the same. That suggests the tiniest particles may be closely tied to blood pressure increases.

The study, funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and National Institutes of Health, was small, a limitation noted by the *Annals of Internal Medicine*. Just 13 participants returned usable data. However, Kaufman said he's confident in the statistical significance because the study is comparing people to themselves.

As for what's happening in the body, Kaufman speculated it was a mini fight-or-flight reaction—that when the small particles entered someone's lungs or bloodstream, the body would perceive them as a threat.

MAYO CLINIC Q&A

Who should get the latest COVID-19 vaccine?

DEAR MAYO CLINIC: The Food and Drug Administration recently approved two new COVID-19 vaccines from Pfizer and Moderna. What are the recommendations for who should get it?

ANSWER: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has recommended the 2023-2024 COVID-19 (mRNA) vaccine for everyone 6 months or older. The COVID-19 vaccine is strongly recommended for people who face the highest risk of experiencing complications from the virus. This group includes older people, those with compromised immune systems and chronic medical conditions such as diabetes and heart disease, and very young children. If you're young and healthy, the vaccine may not benefit you as much, but you still should consider getting it if you live with someone in one of these categories or want to reduce the risk of a COVID-19 infection.

Overall, there is little to no harm in getting the vaccine for protection. For most of the population, the risks from the vaccine are much less significant than the risks from COVID-19 itself. While getting the vaccine does not



ANNA MONEYMAKER

U.S. President Joe Biden receives a fourth dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine in the South Court Auditorium on March 30, 2022, in Washington, D.C.

prevent all COVID-19 cases, the latest vaccines aim to reduce the number of hospitalizations, severe illnesses and deaths from the virus.

Even if you have had COVID-19 previously or have been vaccinated, it is important to get the updated COVID-19 vaccine because the immunity from previous vaccines and infections decreases over time. Another benefit has to do with immune innovation—when the virus changes, it can escape the antibodies you've formed in reaction to the previous versions of the vaccine. By getting the updated vaccine, you are protect-

ing yourself against the strains that are currently circulating.

The 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccines produced by Moderna and Pfizer target a different strain of COVID-19 than was in the original vaccine. Think influenza vaccines—they are all flu vaccines, but the strains they protect against change year after year.

The updated vaccine targets the XBB.1.5 strain that has been circulating throughout the U.S. and most parts of the world since the start of 2023. The World Health Organization has labeled XBB.1.5 as the most transmissible omicron strain to date.

The updated 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccine is the only COVID-19 vaccine currently available. Essentially, with the approval of the new vaccine, the older vaccines have lost their approval.

Other methods to protect yourself from COVID-19 include getting enough sleep and exercise. Avoid highly crowded indoor spaces and consider wearing a mask when you cannot avoid those situations. If you become sick, wear a mask to protect those around you and stay home to avoid exposing people at your workplace and elsewhere.

The COVID-19 vaccine and the influenza vaccine can be given at the same time. Keep in mind that there is no way to tell the difference between flu, cold, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) or COVID-19 symptoms besides testing.

Visit Vaccines.gov to find vaccination providers near you. Information may be limited in some states. Text your ZIP code to 438829 or call 800-232-0233 to find vaccine locations near you in the U.S.—Dr. Priya Sampathkumar, Infectious Diseases and Occupational Medicine, Rochester, Minnesota (*Mayo Clinic News Network*)

Healthy Living

Hunger reducer

Eating low-fat protein makes you feel less hungry and may help you lose weight.

Pumping up the glucose

- Protein increases glucose production in small intestine
- Liver detects glucose, signals brain that stomach is full

Low-fat, protein-rich foods include the shrimp and tofu dish shown here

Source:
Cell
Metabolism,
TNS Photo
Service



Life & Style

‘Killers of the Flower Moon’ named best film of 2023 by NY critics

NEW YORK (AP)—Martin Scorsese’s “Killers of the Flower Moon” has been named the best film of the year by the New York Film Critics Circle.

It’s the third time that Scorsese has been given the best film award from his hometown’s critics, who named 1990’s “GoodFellas” their top movie, as well as 2019’s “The Irishman.” On Thursday, the group also awarded Lily Gladstone, who stars alongside Leonardo DiCaprio in “Killers of the Flower Moon,” best actress.

“Killers of the Flower Moon,” a \$200 million Apple Studios production based on David Grann’s nonfiction best-seller, chronicles the Osage murders of the 1920s.

“Oppenheimer,” Christopher Nolan’s blockbuster drama about J. Robert Oppenheimer and the Manhat-



This image released by Apple TV+ shows, from left, JaNae Collins, Lily Gladstone, and Cara Jade Myers in a scene from “Killers of the Flower Moon.”

tan Project, picked up several awards: best director for Nolan and best cinematography, by Hoyte van Hoytema.

The New York Film Crit-

ics Circle, founded in 1935, is the oldest critics group in the country. The awards will be handed out at a dinner on Jan. 3. Last year, the critics named

Todd Field’s “Tár” the best film of 2022.

Here’s a full list of their picks:

■ Best Film: “Killers of the

Flower Moon”

■ Best Director: Christopher Nolan, “Oppenheimer”

■ Best Actress: Lily Gladstone, “Killers of the Flower Moon”

■ Best Actor: Franz Rogowski, “Passages”

■ Best International Film: “Anatomy of a Fall”

■ Best Supporting Actress: Da’Vine Joy Randolph, “The Holdovers”

■ Best Supporting Actor: Charles Melton, “May December”

■ Best Screenplay: “May December”

■ Best Non-Fiction Film: “Menus-Plaisirs—Les Troisgros”

■ Best Cinematography: Hoyte van Hoytema, “Oppenheimer”

■ Best First Film: “Past Lives”

■ Best Animated Film: “The Boy and the Heron”

■ Special Award: Karen Cooper, director of the Film Forum, the standard-bearing New York arthouse cinema

Scotland says bye to its giant pandas, who are returning to China after a 12-year stay

EDINBURGH, Scotland (AP)—Visitors to the Edinburgh Zoo had their final chance to see and bid farewell Thursday to a pair of popular

giant pandas who are returning home to China after more than a decade in Scotland.

Yang Guang and Tian Tian are leaving in early December after a 12-year stay. They have been a popular attraction since people lined the road outside the zoo to greet them when they arrived in 2011.

They are the latest pandas to leave the West after exchange agreements have expired and not been renewed by China.

The only U.S. zoo with pandas is in Atlanta and its agreement expires next year. Washington’s National Zoo sent its three pandas—Mei Xiang, Tian Tian and their cub, Xiao Qi Ji—to China earlier in November. The black and white bears at the San Diego Zoo were sent home in 2019 and the remaining panda at the Memphis Zoo in Tennessee returned earlier this year.

Veteran China-watchers have speculated that the People’s Republic is gradually pulling its bears from American and European zoos due to tensions with Western governments over a host of issues.

SHOWBIZ TIDBITS

The director of Russia’s Mariinsky Theatre, Valery Gergiev, is also put in charge of the Bolshoi

MOSCOW (AP)—The Russian government on Friday named Valery Gergiev, the renowned director of the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, to also lead Moscow’s Bolshoi Theatre. Gergiev is replacing Vladimir Urin at the Bolshoi. Urin announced Thursday that he was stepping down after a decade, but didn’t explain the reason behind his move. Some Russian media said the departure of 76-year-old Urin was related to health issues. Others speculated it was linked to a letter calling for an end to Moscow’s military action

in Ukraine that he and some other prominent cultural figures signed after the Kremlin sent troops across the border in February 2022.

Tony winner Audra McDonald to serve as grand marshal of 2024 Rose Parade

PASADENA, Calif. (AP)—Audra McDonald will serve as grand marshal of the 135th Rose Parade next year. The 53-year-old actor and singer was introduced Friday on the lawn of Tournament House in Pasadena. “As a California kid raised in Fresno—very proud to be from Fresno—the new year was always ushered in with the Rose Bowl,” McDonald said. “Every January

first I’d wake up early to watch the parade and the game with my family.” The six-time Tony Award winner will ride the 5 1/2-mile route down Colorado Boulevard in Pasadena on Jan. 1. McDonald will be part of the coin flip for the 110th Rose Bowl game later that day.

Illinois appeals court affirms actor Jussie Smollett’s convictions and jail sentence

An appeals court upheld the disorderly conduct convictions Friday of actor Jussie Smollett, who was accused of staging a racist, homophobic attack against himself in 2019 and lying about it to Chicago police. Smollett, who appeared in the TV show

“Empire,” challenged the role of a special prosecutor, jury selection, evidence and many other aspects of the case. But all were turned aside in a 2-1 opinion from the Illinois Appellate Court. Smollett had reported to police that he was the victim of a racist and homophobic attack by two men wearing ski masks. The search for the attackers soon turned into an investigation of Smollett himself, leading to his arrest on charges he had orchestrated the whole thing. (AP)

Kiss say farewell to live touring, become first US band to go virtual and become digital avatars

On Saturday night, Kiss closed out the final performance of

their “The End of the Road” farewell tour at New York City’s famed Madison Square Garden. But as dedicated fans surely know—they were never going to call it quits. Not really. During their encore, the band’s current lineup—founders Paul Stanley and Gene Simmons as well as guitarist Tommy Thayer and drummer Eric Singer—left the stage to reveal digital avatars of themselves. After the transformation, the virtual Kiss launched into a performance of “God Gave Rock and Roll to You.” The cutting-edge technology was used to tease a new chapter of the rock band: after 50 years of Kiss, the band is now interested in a kind of digital immortality. (AP)

Boyfriend eager to keep girlfriends from meeting

DEAR ABBY: My boyfriend, “Rick,” and I broke up 10 years ago and reunited two years ago. I’m in good health, own my own home, and am financially independent. Rick is nine years older. He owns his own home and is retired. We have been seeing each other every week for the last two years. He has spent many hours painting and doing repairs to my house. I cook for him and give him massages, and we have a fantastic sex life.

So, what is the problem? Rick is emotionally involved with another woman. He claims they aren’t in any way sexually involved. Should I tell her about his involvement with me? I have her name, address and phone number. Rick refuses to tell her about me because he says it will “upset her.” I think she ought to know. What do you think I should do? I love him dearly and don’t want to lose him.

BEING PLAYED IN NEW JERSEY?

DEAR BEING PLAYED?: Listen to your intuition. The first thing you should do (if you haven’t) is ask Rick WHY that woman’s knowing about you would “upset” her. (Does she think his relationship with her is exclusive?) The second would be to tell him you would like him to introduce the two of you. If he refuses, call her. You deserve to know exactly what’s going on, which may be that they

are much more involved than he has been admitting.

■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: My friend “Chris” and I decided to go on a weekend trip together. The tickets had to be purchased before they sold out. I told Chris I’d put them on my credit card, and Chris agreed to pay me back. Our original plan was to stay with a group of people, but at the last minute, Chris admitted to being upset that we weren’t going alone.

Not wanting to upset Chris, I canceled plans with the other group. Chris offered to pay for the food, which I thought was great and would replace some of what was owed me. But when we got to the register, Chris stepped back so I would pay. Almost as soon as we got to the hotel, Chris and Chris’ partner got in an argument on the phone and spent most of the trip arguing via text.

The night before we were supposed to leave, Chris and I got into an argument. I lost Chris in a crowd, and when I got back to the hotel, they were packing their bag and leaving. We sat down, talked and agreed tensions were high, but Chris still wanted to end the trip early.

The trip was three months ago. Since then, I have texted Chris multiple times asking to be repaid and have received no response. I thought maybe Chris is mad at me, but they still send me our traditional daily meme. Abby, they offered to pay

DEAR ABBY

By Abigail Van Buren
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.



me back a few times before the trip but never followed through. At this point, I don’t know what to do.

TRIPPING OUT IN INDIANA

DEAR TRIPPING OUT: At this point, you should write off the money you are due from Chris. It should be clear by now that your friend is a flake and has other issues as well.

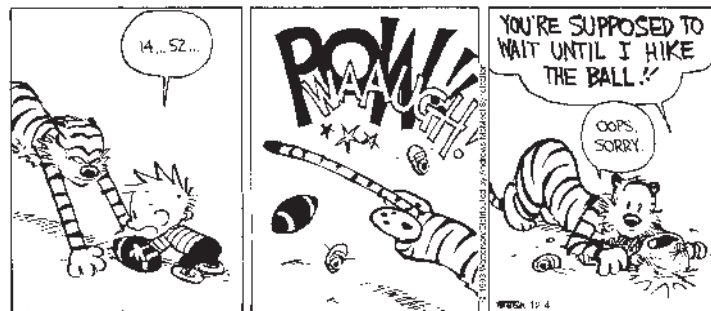
■ ■ ■

To receive a collection of Abby’s most memorable – and most frequently requested – poems and essays, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for \$8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson



DARN TIGERS. YOU CAN EXPLAIN THE RULES TO 'EM, BUT YOU CAN'T SUPPRESS THEIR SURPRISE POUNCE INSTINCT.

Garfield®

By Jim Davis



Adam@home

By Bryan Basset



The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Squad
5 Wee dollop
8 Church area
12 D.C. veteran
14 New York's — Field
15 Board game pieces
16 Eye drop
17 Airline to Sweden
18 Matt with a popular website
20 Use elbow grease on
23 Cruising
24 Rock's — Mötley —
25 Dropped the ball
28 Ad —
29 Implores
30 Cover
32 Introduce gradually
34 Employ
35 —
36 Particulars, in slang

DOWN

37 "Good grief!"
40 "Diamonds" singer
41 Actor
42 Some subway drivers
47 Garrison
48 The whole crowd
49 Ways to the WWW
50 At once
51 Roof overhang

1 Kabuki alter-native
3 — -de-France
4 Sniffer's need
5 Darkens
6 Expert serve
7 Bail providers
8 Genuine
9 Multi-colored
10 Male deer
11 Green land
13 Romanov ruler
19 Soldiers in gray
20 Learning ctr.

21 Cut short
22 "I stubbed my toe!"
23 Saul Bellow's March
25 First-termers
26 Writer Wiesel
27 Grime
29 Exploits
31 —
33 Warnings
34 Call for attention
36 Couturier Christian
37 California's — Stadium
38 Med. plan options
39 Tombstone lawman
40 Hearty dish
43 Egg (Pref.)
44 Extinct bird
45 Ltr. holder
46 Born

Solution time: 21 mins.

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| W | A | R | G | A | P | E | O | H | I | O |
| I | L | E | R | I | O | T | N | I | C | K |
| I | I | A | M | A | R | A | H | L | E | A |
| L | U | C | Y | A | I | L | E | Y | | |
| B | A | D | G | E | | T | O | L | L | |
| A | L | E | S | | T | U | N | A | M | E |
| R | F | A | | T | O | M | F | S | | N |
| T | E | L | L | M | A | M | A | | P | R |
| C | S | P | A | N | | A | L | E | C | |
| A | H | F | M | | T | A | J | M | A | H |
| S | A | R | A | | S | L | O | E | C | P |
| A | M | P | S | | A | B | B | E | R | D |

Last Friday's Answer

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Alison Pill, 38; Jaleel White, 47; Fisher Stevens, 60; Kathryn Bigelow, 72.

Happy Birthday: Leave nothing to chance. Do your due diligence and proceed with confidence. It's up to you to control and manufacture what you want. Change is apparent but will require a hands-on approach to minimize the mental, emotional or physical cost. Trust yourself, not hearsay. Break down every detail separately, and you can transform your intentions into something concrete. A passionate mind will lead to an exciting transformation. Your numbers are 4, 17, 21, 24, 32, 37, 49.

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Stay focused on what's important to you and what you need to do to keep your cash flowing and growing. Learn from mistakes and refuse to let anyone interfere or convince you to do something that isn't in your best interest. Put yourself first. ****

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Don't labor over what others do; pay attention to what's important and how you deal with matters that affect others. Your actions will be your calling card for when you need something in return. Be the one to make a difference, and something good will happen. ***

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Check your emotions at the door and spare yourself the grief of dealing with people who put you down or use blackmail to get their way. Concentrate on nurturing meaningful relationships and taking care of your responsibilities, and you'll acquire momentum and personal gain. ***

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Take better care of yourself, your possessions and what you've worked so hard to achieve. Abide by the rules, get the documentation necessary to follow your plans and leave nothing to chance. Surround yourself with contributors. ***

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Do what's best for you instead of following the crowd or compromising to please others. Too much of anything will lead to disaster. Play by the rules, stick to what's feasible and avoid overindulgence. Stick to what and who you know. ****

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Don't take on too much. You can make changes, but don't promise the impossible. Structure everything you do to coincide with your time and skills in order to handle matters sufficiently. Make home improvements that offer comfort and convenience. Embrace change; opportunities will unfold. **

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Explore possibilities, expand your options and learn as you go. Taking courses that augment your skills and build confidence will help you diversify and head in a direction that allows you more freedom to follow a path that offers versatility and peace of mind. ****

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Change what's necessary. Trying to push something past someone will backfire. Offer alternatives and give others a chance to weigh in, and you'll be able to maintain control and keep everyone happy. Honesty is the best policy when dealing with money or joint ventures. ***

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Pick up the pace and control the outcome. Don't make decisions based on hearsay or let someone manipulate you into something that doesn't benefit you directly. Emotional situations will require understanding. Refuse to allow anger to surface when compassion is necessary. Choose self-improvement over changing others. ***

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): A proposition will be misleading. Research before making a personal or physical change. The information you gather will help you find an affordable way to improve how or where you live. Play by the rules and do things according to code to avoid setbacks. ***

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Design your space to suit your needs. Create a workspace conducive to achieving goals and a relaxing space that allows you to unwind. If you balance your lifestyle to meet your needs, you'll find it easier to say no to others and feel better about yourself. *****

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Review your situation, friendships and long-term plans. A fresh look at an old plan will offer insight into what will benefit you the most. Change whatever is causing instability in your life and replace it with whatever makes you feel comfortable. **

Birthday Baby: You are engaging, sensitive and expressive. You are inventive and spontaneous.

☺: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ☹: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ☼: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ☼☼: Aim high; start new projects. ☼☼☼: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 4 | | | 3 | 9 | 1 | 7 | | |
| | | | 7 | 5 | | 6 | | 3 | |
| | | 3 | 2 | | 6 | 7 | | | 4 |
| 2 | 8 | 9 | | | 1 | 3 | | | |
| | 6 | 1 | | 5 | | 4 | 2 | | |
| | | 3 | | 9 | | 7 | 1 | | |
| 3 | | | 4 | 1 | | | | 9 | |
| 1 | 7 | | | | 5 | 2 | | | |
| | | 5 | | | | | | | |

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Last Friday's Answer

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 2 |
| 8 | 2 | 1 | 9 | 3 | 7 | 5 | 6 | 4 |
| 6 | 7 | 5 | 2 | 8 | 4 | 9 | 3 | 1 |
| 2 | 6 | 7 | 4 | 9 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 8 |
| 3 | 9 | 4 | 1 | 6 | 8 | 2 | 5 | 7 |
| 5 | 1 | 8 | 3 | 7 | 2 | 4 | 9 | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 6 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| 1 | 5 | 2 | 8 | 4 | 9 | 6 | 7 | 3 |
| 4 | 3 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 1 | 8 | 2 | 9 |

Difficulty: ★

12/4

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WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them. Circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

TOWNHOUSES

Solution: 10 letters

L O C A T I O N A B R U F O T
A O H I S T O R I C I T Y C O
W I U N I F O R M O O R B O G
N T D N A L N S F F H E U M E
O A T E G A T E A U O N D P T
I P N A K E N M W L M O G L H
T R E S L C I H Y Y E T E E E
C O C L E L A T N C O S T X R
U P A L Y L I T G G N R D E S
R E J A L N E O S A I A K L E
T R D W U E T I W F R S O P I
S T A M R E N T N N O A E U R
N Y M T N E M Y A P E O G D O
O O S R I A T S E C A R R E T
C O N D O M I N I U M E Z I S

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Adjacent, Budget, City, Community, Complex, Condominium, Construction, Cost, Design, Duplex, Family, Fence, Garage, Gate, Hallway, Historic, Home, Land, Lawn, Location, Lounge, New York, Owner, Patio, Payment, Property, Rent, Roof, Room, Sale, Size, Stacked, Stairs, Stone, Stories, Street, Tall, Terrace, Together, Uniform, Urban, Walls

Last Friday's Answer: Children

Purchase WONDERWORD books in time for the holidays! Visit www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-8-2-8480. (In Canada, call 1-855-232-2387.)

STUMPED?

For answers to today's crossword, call 1-900-226-5955! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

Clippers beat Warriors in Los Angeles to split home-and-home series



LOS ANGELES (AP)—The Los Angeles Clippers only led for 9.2 seconds against the Golden State Warriors. That was all the time they needed.

Paul George hit a stepback 3-pointer for the Clippers' first lead of the game and they hung on for a 113-112 victory Saturday after trailing by 22 points in the second half.

"We just didn't give up," he said. "That's what it takes."

George led the Clippers with 25 points, six rebounds and six assists. James Harden added 21 points and Kawhi Leonard had 20. They had dropped three of five coming in.

"This was a gutsy win for us and we needed a win like this," Clippers coach Tyronn Lue said.

Stephen Curry missed a jumper with the Warriors clinging to a 112-110 lead. Russell Westbrook grabbed the defensive rebound and fed George in transition.

"I was looking at Steph the whole time, Steph's looking at me," George said. "I was looking to go to the rim. Steph kind of held in the paint waiting for my drive. At that point it was just try to create space for the 3."

After a timeout, Curry got into the paint, got double-teamed and passed to Draymond Green, who missed a potential game-winning 3 at the buzzer. The Warriors made 17 3-pointers in the game, with four each by Green, Curry and Klay Thompson.

"He's a great player and can shoot the ball anywhere on the floor and off one leg. Just try to stay in front of him," said Leonard, who was helping guard Curry at the end. "My teammates did a good job. Russ stepped up and made him think about it and he passed it to the corner."

Curry led the Warriors with 22 points and 11 assists in his 900th NBA game. Green had 21 points and nine rebounds, and Moses Moody added 21 points and made 9 of 10 free throws.

The Warriors blew a huge lead for the second time this week, having lost a 24-point advantage against Sacramento on Tuesday.

"It felt like we deserved this one," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said.

The Clippers avenged a 120-114 loss to Golden State two days earlier in San Francisco.

"It's big," Leonard said. "We've been trying to be consistent. We're getting better but very slow. With the way things have been going it feels great to pull out a win. We just got to stay confident and stay motivated."

The Warriors led 111-106 on a pair of free throws by Moody with 1:22 remaining. Harden



Los Angeles Clippers forward Paul George (13) shoots a 3-pointer against Golden State Warriors guard Klay Thompson during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Los Angeles, Saturday, Dec. 2, 2023.

scored to get the Clippers within striking distance before George's game-winning shot.

Thompson's 3-pointer pushed Golden State's lead to 98-88 early in the fourth. The Clippers ran off seven in a row to get within three.

Led by Harden's 15 points, the Clippers rallied from 22 points down to within two in the third. But Thompson hit a basket and a 3-pointer that kept the Warriors ahead 92-85 headed into the fourth.

The Warriors stretched their lead to 17 points in the second. The Clippers finally mustered a bit of momentum, outscoring Golden State 10-2 to cut their deficit to nine.

But Curry answered by scoring 10 of the Warriors' final 12 points, hitting consecutive 3-pointers, to send them into halftime leading 67-48. Five players combined to make 12 of 22 3s in the half, when the Warriors had 19 assists.

The Warriors set the tone offensively with Green's first 3-pointer to open the game. They hit seven 3s in the quarter, when they led by 13 points. Green sank back-to-back 3s that drew a loud reaction from a crowd that was full of Golden State fans. His four 3-pointers tied his career high for most in a quarter.

Golden State's Chris Paul missed his second straight game with left lower leg nerve contusion. Andrew Wiggins sat out with right finger soreness.

BUCKS 132, HAWKS 121

MILWAUKEE (AP)—Giannis Antetokounmpo had 32 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists for his first triple-

double of the season and 36th overall, helping Milwaukee beat Atlanta.

Damian Lillard added 25 points and nine assists, and Cameron Payne had 18 points in 20 minutes off the bench. Milwaukee won its seventh straight at home and avenged its only loss in 10 home games this season, a 127-110 setback to the Hawks in late October.

Trae Young led Atlanta with 32 points and 12 assists. Dejounte Murray added 30 points, and Clint Capela had 10 points and 17 rebounds.

NETS 129, MAGIC 101

NEW YORK (AP)—Mikal Bridges scored 26 of his 42 points in the first quarter and Brooklyn ended Orlando's winning streak at nine.

Orlando was trying for first 10-game winning streak in franchise history, but had little hope after Bridges outscored them by himself as the Nets ran out to a 43-22 lead after 12 minutes.

Bridges shot 12 for 20 from the field and 15 for 18 from the free throw line, falling three points shy of his career high. The Nets have won four of five.

Franz Wagner and Cole Anthony each scored 20 points for Orlando.

KINGS 123, NUGGETS 117

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP)—De'Aaron Fox had 26 points and a career-high 16 assists, Malik Monk made a clutch 3-pointer late in the fourth quarter and Sacramento beat Denver to spoil Nikola Jokic's NBA-leading eighth triple-double.

Jokic finished with 36 points, 14 assists and 13 rebounds, the

114th career triple-double for Denver's big man. The rest of the NBA had eight triple-doubles combined going into the night.

Monk scored 26 points, while Domantas Sabonis added 17 points, 15 rebounds and seven assists. Reggie Jackson scored 20 points for Denver.

SUNS 116, GRIZZLIES 109

PHOENIX (AP)—Devin Booker returned after missing a game because of a sprained right ankle and had 34 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists to lead Phoenix past Memphis.

Booker hit a 3-pointer to start the fourth quarter and put the Suns up by 15, their biggest lead of the game to that point. He was also 13 for 13 from the free throw line.

Kevin Durant had 27 points, though he missed his first free throw of the game to end his single-season team record streak at 67. Jaren Jackson Jr. led Memphis with a season-high 37 points on 13-of-20 shooting.

THUNDER 126, MAVERICKS 120

DALLAS (AP)—Jalen Williams scored 23 points and Oklahoma City rallied after allowing Dallas' NBA-record 30-0 run in the fourth quarter to beat the Mavericks.

The spurt took the Mavericks from a 111-87 deficit to a 117-111 lead with 4:18 to play. The NBA said the previous record in the play-by-play era was a 29-0 run by Cleveland against Milwaukee on Dec. 6, 2009. Dallas led 120-118 before the Thunder scored the game's final eight points.

Dallas star Luka Doncic had his 59th career regular-season triple-double with 36 points, 18 assists and 15 assists in a season-high 46 minutes.

LAKERS 107, ROCKETS 97

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Anthony Davis had 27 points and 14 rebounds and Los Angeles kept Houston winless on the road.

Austin Reaves added 18 points off the bench and LeBron James had 16 points and seven assists.

Fred VanVleet scored 22 points for Houston. The Rockets dropped their third in a row overall and fell to 0-8 away from home.

PACERS 144, HEAT 129

MIAMI (AP)—Bruce Brown scored 30 points, Obi Toppin added 22 and Indiana overcame scoring leader Tyrese Haliburton's absence to beat Miami.

The Pacers shot 66%, the second-best rate in franchise history. They shot 67% against Minnesota on Oct. 24, 2017. And it was the best percentage ever against a Heat team; the Los Angeles Lakers shot 64% against Miami on Nov. 23, 1988.

T.J. McConnell shot 10 for 11 and finished with 20 points and 11 assists off the bench for Indiana, and Aaron Nesmith also had 20 points. Jimmy Butler scored 33 points for Miami.

Haliburton was dealing with right knee soreness and what the team said was an upper respiratory infection. Pacers coach Rick Carlisle said it was the non-COVID illness, not the knee, that kept Hali-

burton out on Saturday.

TIMBERWOLVES 123, HORNETS 117

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP)—Karl-Anthony Towns scored 28 points, Rudy Gobert had a season-high 26 and grabbed 12 rebounds and Minnesota beat Charlotte.

West-leading Minnesota improved to 15-4. Naz Reid scored 23 points and Mike Conley had 14 points and 10 assists. Terry Rozier scored 23 points for Charlotte.

Charlotte led by four with 4:53 remaining before Towns and Gobert combined to score eight points in a 13-3 surge that put the Timberwolves ahead 115-109 with 2:02 left.

CAVALIERS 110, PISTONS 101

DETROIT (AP)—Max Strus and Darius Garland each scored 22 points and Cleveland handed Detroit its 17th straight loss.

The Pistons are 2-18, with the losing streak the longest in one season in franchise history and second-longest overall behind a 21-game slide at the end of the 1979-80 season and start of 1980-81. They haven't won since Oct. 28 against Chicago.

Donovan Mitchell added 20 points for Cleveland, and Jarrett Allen had 19 points and 11 rebounds. Cade Cunningham had 23 points and 11 assists for Detroit, while Bojan Bogdanovic scored 22 points in his season debut.

BULLS 124, PELICANS 118

CHICAGO (AP)—Coby White scored a season-high 31 points, DeMar DeRozan added 24 points and 10 assists and Chicago beat New Orleans.

DeRozan missed the previous game with a left ankle sprain but took charge of a Bulls team missing Zach LaVine, helping them turn around the game in the third quarter en route to their second straight victory. White helped Chicago put it away with an alley-ooop to Patrick Williams for a six-point lead with 20 seconds left.

Brandon Ingram scored 23 points for New Orleans.

JAZZ 118, TRAIL BLAZERS 113, OT

SALT LAKE CITY (AP)—Collin Sexton scored a season-high 25 points, Keyonte George had a career-high 20 points to go with six rebounds and six assists and Utah beat Portland in overtime.

John Collins added 18 points, and Omer Yurtseven had a season-high 15 rebounds.

Malcolm Brogdon and Shaedon Sharpe had 25 points each for Portland.

Prescott, Cowboys extend home win streak after beating Seahawks



ARLINGTON, Texas (AP)—Trailing Seattle in the fourth quarter, Dak Prescott

and the Dallas Cowboys knew there was no way they could extend their NFL record of five consecutive 20-point wins at home to start the season.

They kept alive the bigger streak at AT&T Stadium.

Prescott threw three touchdown passes and the Cowboys won their 14th consecutive home game, rallying to beat the Seahawks 41-35 on Thursday night.

Prescott's 12-yard pass to Jake Ferguson put Dallas in front with 4 1/2 minutes remaining as the Cowboys (9-3) set up a rematch with NFC East rival Philadelphia by escaping for a fourth consecutive victory since falling to the Eagles 28-23 to start November.

"I told the team after the game we need games like this," coach Mike McCarthy said. "To get to where you want to go, you have to win these kind of games."

Geno Smith threw three touchdown passes to D.K. Metcalf, including a 73-yarder, as the Seahawks (6-6) got their offense going. But Seattle couldn't avoid a third consecutive loss to drop to .500 for the first time since splitting its first



Dallas Cowboys' CeeDee Lamb, left, and Dak Prescott (4) celebrate after Lamb's touchdown catch in the first half of an NFL football game against the Seattle Seahawks in Arlington, Texas, Thursday, Nov. 30, 2023.

two games of the season.

"There's no concession to losing, but we will definitely build on this," coach Pete Carroll said. "The story is not told what's going to happen."

Dallas' Brandon Aubrey kicked four field goals to extend the 28-year-old rookie's NFL record to 26 consecutive makes to start a career.

Neither team punted, the

fifth time in NFL history that's happened. But the Dallas defense, ranked third in the league coming in, got fourth-down stops on the Seahawks' final three possessions. And DaRon Bland made his NFL-leading eighth interception late in the third quarter after he was burned several times earlier in the game.

The Cowboys kept alive

their best home winning streak since an 18-game run at old Texas Stadium from 1979-81.

Dallas trailed 35-30 when Zach Charbonnet was stopped on fourth-and-1 near midfield. Seven plays later, Ferguson scored, and Prescott hit Brandin Cooks for the 2-point conversion. Cooks also had a TD catch in the second quarter.

CeeDee Lamb had the other

touchdown catch while finishing with 12 catches for 116 yards, and his 24-yard run on a jet sweep helped set up Aubrey's final field goal to put Dallas ahead by six. That came after Smith threw incomplete on fourth down near midfield with 3:11 to go.

Dallas had a double-digit lead entering the fourth quarter in each of the first five

breezy home victories. This time, it trailed for the first 25-plus minutes after halftime before beating a team with a winning record for the first time this season.

"This was a big one to get," Prescott said. "The first one with a winning record, but more importantly in the fashion that we did. Tough game, down at halftime, down in the fourth quarter. The guys and the team just making plays when plays were needed."

The Seahawks reached midfield with 1:11 left, but Micah Parsons' pressure on fourth down forced Smith to throw the ball into the ground, sealing the victory.

Metcalf had a season-high 134 yards on six catches in his second career three-TD game as the Seahawks scored touchdowns on five of their first seven drives after coming in with 20 consecutive possessions without an offensive TD.

Smith also ran for a score while throwing for 334 yards with an interception.

Seattle's stretch without an offensive TD ended on its third play—and longest on offense this season—when Metcalf beat Bland a week after the Dallas cornerback set an NFL record with his fifth interception return for a touchdown this season.

Bland cut in front of Metcalf to try to break up the slant as safety Donovan Wilson closed in, leaving Metcalf free up the middle of the field to reach 22.23 mph, the fastest for a ball-carrier since early in the 2020 season, on the way to a 7-3 lead and the Cowboys' first deficit at home this season.

Jaxon Smith-Njigba set up two touchdowns by drawing pass interference penalties in the end zone. On the second, officials ruled Smith-Njigba made a 30-yard TD catch over Bland. But the call on Smith-Njigba's catch was overturned on review.

With 7 seconds remaining before halftime and no timeouts, Smith threw a 1-yard scoring pass before officials said Dallas had called timeout, then threw a 1-yarder to Metcalf that counted. That gave the Seahawks a 21-20 lead at the break.

Seattle scored again to start the second half on Smith's 5-yard run, but the Cowboys answered with Tony Pollard's 6-yard score as the teams combined for 58 first downs (33 for Dallas, 25 for Seattle) while converting 17 of 28 third downs (9 of 14 for the Seahawks, 8 of 14 for the Cowboys).

"I thought we played a tough four quarters going back and forth," Seattle safety Julian Love said. "Didn't finish it."

Tomlin thinks T.J. Watt is 'best defensive player on the planet'

PITTSBURGH (AP)—The momentary bliss-fueled blackouts that used to consume T.J. Watt after every big play still come. Just not as frequently as they used to.

It's not for lack of opportunity. If anything, it's the opposite.

Games come. Games go. And in seemingly every single one of them the Pittsburgh Steelers all-everything outside linebacker makes a play—be it a sack, an interception, a well-timed pressure, a pass deflection—that summons something from deep within Watt's id and briefly turns him into a snarling, preening "dog," as former teammate Bud Dupree once put it.

Ask Watt why those giddy moments don't pop up as frequently as they used to and a player seemingly preprogrammed to deflect attention to others comes as close as he may ever get to a humble brag.

"Because I've done it," Watt said Friday before quickly catching himself. "I don't want to say like ..."

And then the NFL sack leader switched tactics in mid-thought, a verbal two-step akin to how he sets up opposing offensive tackles each week.

"I've just been in the game for so long that it's more of like I'm just able to process it more

and it's not a euphoric-type feeling," Watt continued. "It is still obviously the best feeling, but I'm able to be more present in the moment (now)."

The Steelers (7-4) have needed him to be.

While the seemingly endless hand-wringing surrounding (now former) offensive coordinator Matt Canada's tumultuous tenure consumed headlines and, on some level, the locker room during the opening three months, Watt's steadying presence and electric play kept Pittsburgh afloat.

He and running mate Alex Highsmith almost single-handedly beat Cleveland in Week 2. They teamed up for the game-clinching fumble against Baltimore in Week 5. Watt picked up two sacks in a win over Tennessee in early November, including one on Titans rookie quarterback Will Levis despite losing his helmet immediately after the snap.

Watt is near the pace he set in 2021 when he tied an NFL record with 22 1/2 sacks on his way to his first Defensive Player of the Year award. Not that he wants to talk about it. Trying to prod him into talking about himself is almost as difficult as trying to block him. So maybe it's best to let others—like old-

er brother J.J. Watt—serve as his hype men.

Steelers head coach Mike Tomlin called Watt "the best defensive player on the planet" on Tuesday. Pittsburgh safety Minkah Fitzpatrick—himself a three-time All-Pro—laughed when asked if he took Tomlin's praise of Watt personally.

Mostly because, well, Fitzpatrick thinks Tomlin is right.

"T.J.'s a guy that provides splash all the time, he's a game-wrecker," Fitzpatrick said. "He's an unstoppable force."

A force that former teammate James Conner will see across the line of scrimmage for the first time in his career on Sunday when Arizona (2-10) visits Pittsburgh. Conner and Watt came into the league together in 2017 when the Steelers drafted them two rounds apart.

Their four seasons taught Conner one very valuable lesson on how to deal with a player who is on a Hall of Fame trajectory.

"Getting past TJ? Run fast," Conner said. "TJ is a machine. So the (offensive) line's got to take care of him. But he's going to make plays."

And not just in the backfield. Watt has become adept in coverage. His six passes defended are two off his career high with

a half-dozen games remaining. When the Steelers lost inside linebacker Cole Holcomb against Tennessee last month, Watt lined up in the middle of the field on a handful of snaps and figured it out on the fly.

"It's not like he's one-dimensional," defensive coordinator Teryl Austin said. "He is something else. People plan for that every week, but he still shows up every week in that stat sheet, and that's amazing."

While Watt does spend time outside the season to take advantage of his notoriety—in recent years it's been hard to miss him and his brothers J.J. and Derek doing everything from hawking subs and taco sauce to hosting a game show—between the start of training camp and the middle of winter, Watt is all business.

He's rarely in the locker room, not because he thinks he's above it but because he feels his time is better spent elsewhere, be it the film room, the weight room or the trainer's room. Rookie outside linebacker Nick Herbig, who followed in Watt's footsteps at Wisconsin, has tried to attach himself to Watt whenever possible.

One problem: Watt is, perhaps not surprisingly, pretty elusive.

Highlight sessions during

their early week meetings are met with a mixture of wonder at Watt's uncanny ability to change the arc of a game—and, as a result, a season—and a pang of "yep, I've been there man" from the Steeler offensive linemen who can only shake their head while Watt races around (or occasionally through) their brethren in opposing uniforms.

"You've really got to study him and understand his game and really get in his head to be able to at least have a chance," Pittsburgh rookie right tackle Broderick Jones said. "Because if you're not able to get in his head and make him think, it's going to be a bad day for you."

The bad days have been going on for years for anyone tasked with trying to handle one of two players in NFL history with at least 13 sacks in five of their first seven seasons. The other is Hall of Fame defensive end Reggie White.

It's elite company. Watt, however, isn't spending any time checking out his resume. He still hasn't won a playoff game in his career, let alone a Super Bowl ring. That is what drives him,

"There's so many more pressing things to focus on than who's the best, all that stuff," he said. "I just want to continue to be the best player I can be for myself and for this team."

By MARK RABAGO
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EDITOR



CNMI riders managed to successfully defend their championship in 2022 by edging Guam anew in the 2023 Turkey Cross last Nov. 25 and 26 at the Cowtown Race Park.

The home team won eight out of 15 divisions for bragging rights for another year.

Local riders won the Pee wee ATV Class (Nakoa Torres), Mini ATV Class (Anelia Igotol), Power Puff Class (Billie Inabo Pangelinan), Big Boys ATV Class (Christian "Hollywood" Camacho), Veterans ATV Class (Greg Clark), Veterans Class (Justis "Cuki" Alvarez), In-

CNMI edges Guam in 2023 Turkey Cross



TISHA FERRER

Marianas Racing Association president Charles Cepeda, sixth from right, finished third in the Legends Class of the 2023 Turkey Cross geld last Nov. 25 and 26 at the Cowtown Race Park in Marpi.

termediate Class (Aric Cruz), and Open Expert Class (Shane "Pikaboo" Alvarez).

Guam's seven first place finishes were in the Pee wee I Class (Kyan Mayo), Pee we

II Class (Royce Butler), Mini I Class (Julian Lane), Mini II Class (Jonathan Aguon), Women's Class (Marianna Wenden), Novice Class (Kanene Arceo), and Legends Class (Franklin Rios).

Marianas Racing Association president Charles Cepeda congratulated riders from both U.S. territories for keeping the islands' motocross tradition alive.

"The MRA Turkey Cross 2023 just wrapped up after two days of intense racing. But before that, Guam racers arrived on Wednesday, the day before Thanksgiving, to get some practice in at the Cowtown track. It had been months since they last rode on a track, so they made the most of their time at Cowtown."

The fact that Guam riders opted to spend Thanksgiving away from home showed their utmost commitment to the sport.

"We want to extend our gratitude to the 39 riders from Guam and the over 45 riders from Saipan who participated in this thrilling two-day event. Countless memories were made both on and off the track, as we fostered a sense of competition during the races and a feeling of family off the track. Cowtown provided an excellent venue for everyone, ensuring a great experience for all. The people of Saipan warmly welcomed the racers and their families from Guam, treating them to delicious meals, shopping trips, and sightseeing adventures. The island's hospitality truly left a lasting impression on everyone," he said.

Cepeda also took the opportunity to thank everyone who made the 2023 Turkey Cross possible, namely the Office of the Governor, Office of the Lt. Governor, the CNMI Legislature, the Department of Corrections, the Department of Public Works, Monster Energy, D&Q Distributors, Old Spice, Marpac, Joeten Motors, JEM Enterprises, IT&E, Godfathers Bar, Saipan Ice and Water, Galaxy Snack Bar,

"and all those who contributed in any way. Organizing an event like the Turkey Cross motocross races requires a dedicated team, and we are grateful for everyone's support," he said.

The MRA official also gave a special shoutout to the National Honor Society from Saipan Southern High School for stepping up at the last minute to serve as flaggers and manage the traffic at Cowtown Race Park.

"Personally, I am thrilled to be part of a community that shares a passion for motocross on our islands. We may be fiercely competitive on the track, but it's the love and camaraderie within our motocross family that makes this sport truly special. It's heartwarming to see the National Honor Society students from Saipan Southern High School selflessly volunteering their time to ensure the smooth flow of traffic at Cowtown. Their dedication and willingness to step up at the last minute is a testament to the strong sense of community we have in our motocross family. Together, we create an environment where not only the thrill of competition thrives, but also the bonds of friendship and support," he said.

By CHRYSAL MARINO
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CORRESPONDENT



As Run Saipan gears up for its biggest end of the year's races, it is thankful to Atkins Kroll for once again partnering with them as a President Sponsor of the Run Saipan Holiday Half Marathon and Atkins Kroll 5K race that will take place on Dec. 9.

This comes soon after Atkins Kroll sales manager Kevin Barnes presented Run Saipan president Edward Dela Cruz Jr. and vice president Jenna Kong with a \$5,000 check last Thursday at the Atkins Kroll facility in San Jose, Beach Road.

Dela Cruz and Kong thanked the company's continual support and partnership. "We're really happy to have this event and we hope to have a continuing partnership with AK in the future. So thanks very much," said Kong.

Dela Cruz is also appreciative. "...We can't thank them enough. Without their continued support and sponsorship, we wouldn't be able to bring one of the best races the Marianas has ever seen to Saipan."

He also thanks AK president Alex Yap, AK VP Clark Boswell, and Atkins Kroll's

AK sponsors Run Saipan's holiday races



CHRYSAL MARINO

Run Saipan president Edward Dela Cruz Jr., center, and vice president Jenna Kong, left, pose Atkins Kroll sales manager Kevin Barnes while showing the \$5,000 giant check representing the auto dealership's main sponsorship of the Run Saipan Holiday Half Marathon and Atkins Kroll 5K race this coming Sunday, Dec. 9.

leadership team "You have no idea what this means to us," Dela Cruz said.

Barnes said Atkins Kroll appreciates this opportunity to work with Run Saipan as an opportunity for the company to give back to the community and be a part of something that gets everybody involved in a healthy way.

"Run Saipan does amazing things for the community, getting people out there, getting them active, concerned about their health and keeping the community together in positive ways," Barnes said.

The races will be starting at 5am.

Dela Cruz said the races

this year is different in two ways, one of which is the planned route.

"We're not running the same course this year," he said.

Due to the ongoing road constructions on Beach Road, Run Saipan will be going through Route 30 from Hyatt Regency Saipan's Club Elan and, instead of taking a right to Pacific Islands Club Saipan, they will go to the Commonwealth Health Care Corp. traffic light intersection, and take a left down Route 30.

The turnaround point is going to be the old softball field in Marpi, right after the former Mariana Resort & Spa, and then back to the starting point.

one of their players and kind of just go after him, play our consistent game, and get the win."

Mister said he felt pride on winning the last medal for Team NMI. "We came here late, and some people didn't even know who we were, but I guess now they kind of do... we're just happy to place."

The 27-year-old Johnson also said it felt great representing the NMI. "We felt very proud representing home. We'll continue doing that moving forward. We're also hoping to play in FIVB events that aren't necessarily associated with Pacific Games or Pacific Mini Games, things like Futures Events, maybe some Challenge Events and just try to work our way up the

international ladder."

NMI beach volleyball head coach Tyce Mister said, "just very proud of our team and the hard work they put in for this to get here. Looking forward to more tournaments."

Team manager Chris Nelson, for his part said, "yes, very proud. I think the goal coming in here was to play that Vanuatu team again. It was the same team and players [from the 2022 Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games] and to get that result—to be able to play them and win was sort of a medal game right there even if it came a little early in the tournament. So, now the goal is to be beat the continent of Australia."

Logan Mister left last Satur-

"So that's going to be the most significant difference for the race course. Nothing else will be changed. We will still have the same aid stations for the Saipan full marathon," he said.

The second difference this year is that Run Saipan will be hosting an award banquet at Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan from 12pm to 2pm. "It's going to be the first time we are going to be doing it. ...Last year we focused more on the race and now we're starting to add extra stuff into our half-marathon," said Dela Cruz.

In order to be included in the grand raffle, participants must be present for the banquet. He also noted that the luncheon will also be the launch of Run Saipan's official website, where people can track and register for 2024 events.

Registration for both races is ongoing until Dec. 6 at \$35 for Atkins Kroll 5K, and \$50 for the Holiday Half Marathon. Late registry on Dec. 7-8 will be \$5 extra.

Registering participants may pick up their race packets on Dec. 6, 7, and 8 at the Atkins Kroll showroom, from 3pm to 6pm, and early registration is encouraged.

day morning, while Johnson flew on the charter flight back to Saipan with the team.

Team NMI chef de mission Nick Gross said after the boys' medal, "congrats on our final medal of the Games! I'm proud of our team and all our accomplishments."

For the va'a crew, they finished their races last Friday with a V12 24km long distance event at DC Park.

The men's team came in at 2:43.01 and the women's team time was 2:46.40. They went up against some of the best paddlers in the South Pacific—Tahiti, New Caledonia, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Wallis and Futuna, Samoa, Papua New Guinea, Palau, and Guam.

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chosen as the team's closing ceremony flagbearer last night. She said it was an honor to have been the flagbearer. Tan was also sort of a celebrity after her two-time gold medal finish as she would constantly be asked to take photos with her.

Tan said of her half marathon race, "I just wanted to have fun out there because I never run the half marathon so I'm unfamiliar with the distance and how to race it. So, I'm surprised with coming in fourth and setting a new NMI record." She added that her new time is her new PB by 21 minutes and 26 seconds.

As for the experience of the Games overall, she said, "These games will definitely be memorable, and I will forever cherish all these memories made here in Honiara." Her favorite part of the experience, she said, is the "kindness of the people here in the Solomon Islands. Everyone here has been super friendly, accommodating, and kind."

Now, she said, she has to

go back to school and finish her finals of her master's degree program at the University of Hawaii.

She then said, "Thank you to everyone back home in the CNMI!"

In other athletics results last Friday and Thursday, Maria Igotol threw a distance of 29.07m in the javelin throw; Pony Tang clocked in at 4:53.79 in the men's 1,500m race; Lyle Andrew had a 9.76m shot put throw; and Theodore Rodgers clocked in at 24.15 in the 200m semis.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The NMI's Tania Tan on the last few miles of her half marathon race last Saturday morning in which she came in fourth and broke the NMI half marathon record.

BEACH

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make too many errors, while we were not really on our game—we were making errors and it was just kind of a tough day for us." He added that they thought they were able to beat them because they scrimmaged against them before the tourney started. "They had weaknesses that we were trying to target but during the actual match, those weaknesses weren't shown as much as in the scrimmage."

As for their game against the Solomons, Johnson said, "We felt a lot more confident. They're a really good team, so props to them for making it so far. But we were able to target

STRONG

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as' total. Bodybuilding's Davy Laxa and weightlifting Leowell Cristobal were the other bronze medalists for the NMI.

Following the closing ceremonies of the 2023 Pacific Games last Saturday, Team Marianas returned home Sun-

day night via Solomon Airlines' charter flight. Team Marianas' historic journey to the 2023 Pacific was made possible through the strong support and generosity of Joeten Daidai Foundation, Triple J, Crowne Plaza Resort, IT&E, IP&E, Tan Siu Lin Foundation, Mobil, Tan Holdings, and McDonald's of Guam & Saipan. (PR)

2023 Honiara, Solomon Islands Pacific Games



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
The NMI Men's National Soccer Team poses for a photo before their tree planting event during the 2023 Pacific Games at St. Joseph's School last Friday morning.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
NMI golfers Zhi Min Jin and Joe Sasamoto pose for a photo during the tree planting event of the 2023 Pacific Games last Friday morning at St. Joseph School.



OCEANIA ATHLETICS
Pacific Games Oceania Athletics technical officials including NMI's Greg Borja and Robin Sapong pose for a photo at the National Sports Stadium.



OCEANIA ATHLETICS
NMI sprinter Casey Cruz in action in the 200m semis last week at the National Sports Stadium.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Tania Tan at the start line with other half marathon runners of the women's division last Saturday morning.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
The NMI soccer, bodybuilding, and golf teams participated in the tree planting initiative of the Pacific Games last Friday at St. Joseph School.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
The V6 women's long distance crew before the last day of races last Friday at DC Park.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Northern Marianas Paddling Sports Federation president Justin Andrew takes a selfie with the national va'a team before their last day of races last Friday.



Clippers beat Warriors in Los Angeles to split home-and-home series.

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SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Beach v-ball duo settles for bronze

» Johnson, Mister snag last medal for NMI

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

HONIARA, Solomon Islands—gan Mister and Andrew Johnson didn't get the gold medal they were hoping for in beach volleyball, but bagged the bronze and last medal for Team NMI last Friday night at the SIFF Academy.

The duo silenced home team Solomon Islands and the crowd after two straight and consistent sets, 21-13, 21-15, to win the 13th and last medal for the NMI. Gold went to Australia and Tuvalu took silver.

At the end of the Games yesterday, NMI's medal count stood at 13—5 gold, 1 silver, and 7 bronzes.

The NMI duo had the upper

hand throughout the game as Solomons' Ray Quan and Tam Teriba couldn't reply to most of Mister's kills and Johnson's well-placed returns.

The first set came and went swiftly as the home team went eight straight unanswered points and tried their hardest to put up a better fight in the second set.

There was a brief moment in the second set where they were



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
The NMI's beach volleyball duo Andrew Johnson, left, and Logan Mister with their bronze medals after the awards ceremony last Saturday morning at SIFF Academy.

tied in the early points of the game, and Solomons even took the lead, 10-9, but Mister and Johnson used their communication, faster attacks, and longer limbs to their advantage to hold Solomons to just 15 points and secure the bronze medal.

Mister and Johnson were perfect in pool play after they defeated Palau, Tonga, and rival Vanuatu, but had a tough draw and came up short of a gold medal run after they fell to Australia's Ben Hood and

D'Artagnan Potts in the quarter-finals last Thursday.

Johnson said of their bronze medal, "We really wanted to go for gold, but bronze is good. It definitely showed us that we were able to beat a lot of the teams that were in this tournament. We just got to train more, get stronger, and be ready for Australia next time."

On their game against Australia, Johnson said, "They were just playing well. They didn't

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The NMI's beach volleyball duo Logan Mister and Andrew Johnson, right, on the podium with gold medalists from Australia, center, and silver medalists from Tuvalu during the awards ceremony of beach volleyball last Saturday morning at SIFF Academy.

Fourth for Tania, breaks NMI half marathon record

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

HONIARA, Solomon Islands—NMI's golden girl Tania Tan wrapped up the NMI's showing in the 2023 Pacific Games with a fourth-place finish and shattered the NMI record in the half marathon event early Saturday morning.

Tan came in with a time of 1:29.22 in the 13.1-mile course that spanned St. Joseph's School and ended at the Plaza of the National Sports Stadium, just a few minutes behind the bronze medalist, and updated the old NMI half-marathon standard of 1:40.47 set by Akiko Hagiwara in 2006.

The 22-year-old Tan is also the only woman to have won gold twice for the NMI in a Pacific Games ever.

Tahiti's Sa Debarthez de Mamorie flew into gold with a time of 1:23.39. Silver and bronze were a neck-and-neck race between Solomon Islands' Dianah Matekali (1:24.23) and Sharon Firisua (1:24.54).

There was a total of 14 run-

ners in the women's division and 15 in the men's division.

Tan's run mileage in the past week totaled 22.4 miles overall—5,000m in which she got her first gold and broke three records; the 10,000m in which she got her second gold medal, and the half marathon event.

She ran all her events with less than a couple days of rest in between topped with less-than-desirable conditions in the athletes' village plus the ravages of the hot and humid South Pacific weather.

The two-time Pacific Games gold medalist was also

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The NMI's Tania Tan poses with the CNMI flag after her fourth-place finish of 1:29.22 in the half marathon race last Saturday morning.

Strong finish for Team Marianas

Beach Volleyball's Logan Mister and Andrew Johnson made it to the podium, while athletics' Tania Tan may have set another record, giving Team Marianas a strong finish in the 2023 Pacific Games that concluded last Saturday night in Honiara, the Solomon Islands.

Johnson and Mister dominated home favorite Tam Teriba and Ray Quan in the third place match last Friday, 21-13, 21-15, to hand the NMI a bronze medal. Australia won the gold after downing Tuvalu in the finals, 19-21, 21-18, 15-21. Johnson and Mister finished pool play with a 3-0 record and had a tough draw in the next round when they faced Australia and lost in the semis, 11-21, 18-21. Tuvalu defeated Solomon Islands in the other semis pairing, 21-13, 21-14.

With Mister and Johnson winning the bronze, the NMI's total medal haul in the 2023 Pacific Games is 13—five gold medals, 1 silver, and 7 bronzes.

Tan owned the two golds medals following her stunning victory in the 5K and 10K runs and she nearly added a bronze

after finishing fourth in the half marathon last Saturday. The 22-year-old runner submitted 1:29:22, which pending confirmation from Northern Marianas Athletics, may be a new NMI national record.

Tan, meanwhile, was the NMI's flagbearer at the closing ceremonies of the 2023 Pacific Games. She was joined in the closing ceremonies by her NMA teammates, beach volleyball, bodybuilding, golf, football, tennis, swimming, triathlon, va'a, and weightlifting athletes and officials that showed resilience and teamwork for more than two weeks to represent Team Marianas well and leave a mark in the 2023 Pacific Games.

Besides Tan, the other gold medalists for the NMI were swimming's Isaiah Aleksenko, bodybuilding's Christina Tude-la, and weightlifting's Raymond Santos. Santos also handed the NMI its lone silver medal in Honiara, while Aleksenko had a bronze and his teammates in the two relay races added two more bronzes to Team Marian-

See **STRONG** on Page 18

| COUNTRY | GOLD | SILVER | BRONZE | TOTAL |
|--------------------------|------|--------|--------|-------|
| New Caledonia | 82 | 57 | 58 | 197 |
| Tahiti | 57 | 53 | 50 | 160 |
| Australia | 50 | 24 | 10 | 84 |
| Samoa | 34 | 21 | 21 | 66 |
| Papua New Guinea | 15 | 23 | 29 | 67 |
| Fiji | 21 | 30 | 40 | 91 |
| Solomon Islands | 12 | 37 | 31 | 80 |
| New Zealand | 10 | 13 | 12 | 35 |
| Nauru | 10 | 12 | 6 | 28 |
| Guam | 7 | 4 | 6 | 17 |
| Cook Islands | 5 | 3 | 10 | 18 |
| Marshall Islands | 5 | 3 | 2 | 10 |
| Northern Mariana Islands | 5 | 1 | 7 | 13 |
| Wallis and Futuna | 3 | 6 | 6 | 15 |
| Vanuatu | 3 | 5 | 11 | 19 |
| Kiribati | 3 | 2 | 6 | 11 |
| FSM | 3 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| Tonga | 2 | 8 | 9 | 19 |
| Niue | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Tuvalu | 0 | 5 | 0 | 5 |
| American Samoa | 0 | 3 | 3 | 6 |
| Palau | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| Norfolk Island | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Tokelau | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

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